

BRITISH COLONIAL POLICY IN WEST AFRICA, 1885-1900

by

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INTRODUCTION

This work is an attempt to describe British colonial policy in West Africa between 1885 and 1900. In this brief excursion, the author has two principal objectives. First, to provide a background for the pattern of British entry into West Africa. Second, to examine the pattern of British extension of political authority from the coast to the hinterland.

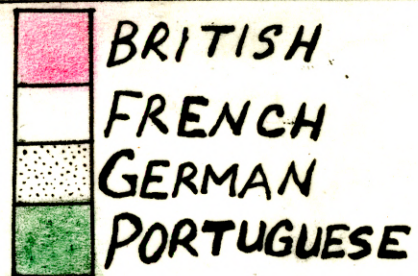
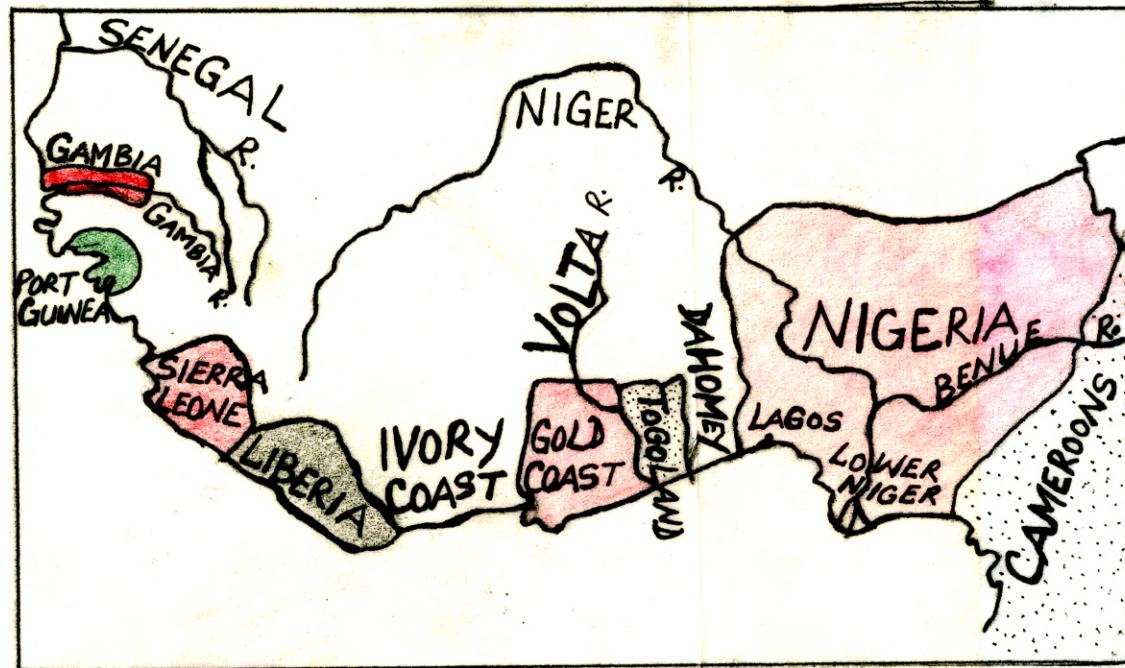
The area known as West Africa extends from the River Senegal on the northwest of Africa to the Cameroons to the southeast. The former British West African Colonies are the Gambia,¹ Sierra Leone, Gold Coast (now Ghana), and Nigeria. All of these states are now independent except the Gambia which is yet awaiting independence. The colonies were acquired by the British Government at different periods of time: the Gambia (1765), Sierra Leone (1808), Gold Coast (1808), and Lagos, Nigeria (1861).

These four countries are by no means a compact or uniform unit. On the contrary, they are separated from one another by stretches of coast. Between one country and the other are wedges of territory which were claimed by France, Germany, and Portugal.² Though these countries have certain geographic characteristics in common, such as climate, vegetation, animal life, and others, each of them has a unique history of its own. The British method

¹There is no real significance other than usage and custom attached to the employment of the article "the" in such place names as the Gambia. The same custom applies to such names as The Hague or the Netherlands.

²German possessions in West Africa (Togoland and the Cameroons) were placed under the United Nations after World War II. They are now independent. France and Portugal still retain some of their colonies in West Africa.

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of acquisition, however, was quite similar in all of the countries. Notwithstanding their differences, a general treatment will be employed in examining British policy in these former colonies. A brief history of British penetration into each of the colonies will, however, be given in subsequent chapters.

On February 19, 1866, the four British colonies were brought under one Government with Sierra Leone as the headquarters. The Letters Patent which united these settlements stated, in part:

We do hereby constitute on the ...West Coast of Africa one Government-in-Chief, which shall be called the Government of our West African Settlements, and shall, until otherwise provided by us, comprise our four Colonies [the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, and Nigeria] or Governments aforementioned under the respective designations, and with the limits hereafter expressed....³

In 1886 the Letters Patent were revoked and the Colonies were separated from one another to become independent colonies.

The history of the conquest of every part of West Africa is in fact the story of the occupation of the coast and a gradual absorption of the interior.⁴ The process of British expansion from the coast to the hinterland is the main theme of British relation with West Africa from 1885 to 1900. The penetration of the hinterland and the consequent establishment of political and administrative control over the colonies was a chequered one. Not only was such expansion accompanied with ruthless displacement of hitherto native chiefs and kings, it also marked the passing of indigeneous administration and cultural values. The direct government of the people by

³Edward Hertslet, editor, Map of Africa by Treaty. London: Harrison & Sons, 1909, 1, 45.

⁴Stephen H. Roberts, The History of French Colonial Policy, 1870-1925. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1963, 302.

British officials working through native chiefs whose power and prestige had been considerably minimized. An examination of contemporary incidents (surveyed later) will reveal that British policy in West Africa between 1885 and 1900 was directed principally towards the assumption of political control over the hitherto self-governing states.

British connection with West Africa dates back to the sixteenth century when British merchants challenged Portuguese monopoly on the west coast of Africa. The Portuguese had enjoyed unchallenged sway in the slave traffic of West Africa. England, though a late comer in the slave trade scramble, gradually but steadily assumed a preponderant share of the trade and eventually succeeded in squeezing out the Portuguese. Until 1885 the British connection with the West African states was limited to the coast. The "Old Coast System," as the dealing was described, meant that coastal chiefs brought the slaves from the hinterland and sold them to the Europeans at the coast. Nothing was known of the areas beyond the coast except weird tales of the benighted peoples and their savagery. To the British the peoples of Africa seemed to be extremely backward; therefore, little attempt was made to know about the people or the geography of the entire continent.⁵

Not until the nineteenth century when the African rivers were explored, and their sources discovered, did any real interest in the "Dark Continent" grow among Europeans. The rivers of Africa, which became the highways of imperialism, were first discovered by Englishmen. The River Niger on the West Coast was discovered by Mungo Park (1795-1805) but its mystery was not solved until in 1830 the Lander brothers (John and Richard) discovered the mouth

⁵Margery Perham, Africans and British Rule. London: Oxford University Press, 1941, 15.

of the river. Shortly after the discovery of the rivers, of which the Niger was the most important, trade was established under the initiative of private merchants. Hence West Africa is often described as "Traders' Empire."⁶ "Like the tiny animalculae who labor in the bed of the ocean laying the foundations of those coral reefs," wrote Allan McPhee, "so the small traders in West Africa collaborated in the work of Empire-building."⁷ The traders exchanged articles of trade, not with the native producers and consumers directly but through middlemen who brought the products from the interior to the coast. These middlemen, because of the lucrative nature of the trade, grew rich from the profits which accrued from their intermediary position. As a natural concomitant, they became important chieftains at the coast. It was through them that the merchants could gain access to the commodities from the interior. Their prestige among the native elements was significantly high. Thus, both the overseas merchants and native producers regarded them as useful agents who promoted trade. In fact, instead of considering them as impediments they were respectfully held as instruments without which trade would decline. Hence did the merchants vie one against the other in lobbying the middlemen by corrupting them with "dashes" and "handshakes"--names applied to "gifts" (such as gin, whisky, and others) given to the middlemen or chiefs in order to buy their favor so that a particular merchant or group might enjoy a trade monopoly in some area.

Before 1885, therefore, trade was one of the primary aims of the British merchants in West Africa. It was on their appeal that missionaries were sent

⁶Allan McPhee, The Economic Revolution in British West Africa. London: George Routledge & Sons, 1926, 2.

⁷Ibid.

out to Christianize the natives. Also on their request, the Imperial Government sent out administrative officials (Consuls) to protect British nationals and to secure peaceful trade. The officials were ostensibly to refrain from interfering in native affairs. Moral influence, through peaceful trade, was to be the guiding principle. Hence, in the words of the Conservative Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, "Great Britain has adopted the policy of advance by commercial enterprise."⁸ What Lord Salisbury meant was that trade, not territory was the primary objective of the British in advancing into West Africa. In an earlier letter to Lord Lyons, former Ambassador in Paris, Salisbury set the pattern for British advance. He wrote:

....Actual authority we cannot exercise....The only form of control we have is that which is called moral influence,... In this we are still supreme....We must devote ourselves to the perfecting of this weapon. And, obviously, the first condition of its use is complete knowledge of what is going on.⁹

The perfecting of this weapon implied that British officials "would have to pull the strings behind the scenes, but appear on the stage as little as possible" until an opportune time for them to assume the political control of the West African Colonies. In implementing the policy, the British officials succeeded in making treaties with native chiefs whereby the chiefs placed themselves under British protection and promised to open up trade. An example of such a treaty is valuable:

⁸British and Foreign State Papers, 1892, LVI, 778. Lord Salisbury to Lord Dufferin, March 30, 1892. Lord Dufferin was the British Ambassador in Paris.

⁹Lady Gwendolen Cecil, The Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932, II, 355. Lord Salisbury to Lord Lyons, July 15, 1879.

The chiefs of Ekoi agree and promise to refrain from entering into any correspondence, Agreement, or Treaty with any foreign nation or Power except with the knowledge and sanction of Her Britannic Majesty's Government. It is agreed that full and exclusive jurisdiction, civil and criminal, over British subjects and their property in the territory of Ekoi is reserved to Her Britannic Majesty, to be exercised by such Consular or other officers as Her Majesty shall appoint for that purpose.¹⁰

The treaty was monopolistic in tone. The chiefs who signed the treaty hardly understood (even though interpreters were available) what rights they were bartering away. In law they were the rulers of the land but the officials were the de facto controllers. Advance by commercial enterprise and the wielding of the weapon of moral influence proved to be more lasting and potent modes of expansion than force and conquest. This policy of moral influence was, however, modified in 1885. Between 1885 and 1900, force and military conquest were used to subjugate native rulers who resisted British entry into the interior of the colonies. In general, however, the story of British expansion in West Africa is an epic in which the "flag followed trade" instead of vice-versa.

It is a fact that commerce formed the real foundation on which British greatness rested. Gladstone (the Liberal Prime Minister) in his speech on "Colonies and Colonization" delivered to the Mechanics Institute in 1885 said:

Commercial enterprise has been the mainspring of [British colonial] creation: Perhaps no other principle would have answered the purpose of forming large and permanent establishments, capable of becoming the nuclei of states.¹¹

¹⁰ British and Foreign State Papers, 1894-5, LXXXVII, 1042; LXXVI (1893-4), 66.

¹¹ Paul Knaplund, Gladstone and British Imperial Policy. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927, 179.

Gladstone espoused the policy of pure commercial relations between the mother country and the colonies without the mother country attempting to take over the internal administration of the states. As Paul Knaplund said, "he clung to this idea throughout the rest of his life."¹² Knaplund exaggerated.

Gladstone was a complex personality. His good and humane intentions did not always correspond with his actions.¹³ He valued colonies because they would afford "trade and employment" opportunities for the mother country. Consequently, he said, colonial enterprise would promote the "creation of so many happy Englands."¹⁴ Trade and employment made available in the colonies would help to engender "the silken ties of love and affection between the mother country and the colonies. Subjection by military force, he argued, would hardly bring about any sentimental bond. Gladstone deplored the idea of annexing the colonies. He said: "Her Majesty's Government would not annex any territory, great or small, without the well-understood and expressed wish of the people to be annexed."¹⁵ The paradox of Gladstone's noble ideals on the colonial question lay in his preaching one doctrine and practicing the opposite. It is quite ironic that it was under his regime that both Egypt and West Africa were acquired; not, as he said, with their well-understood and expressed wish. Hence, remarked G. T. Garratt, "Gladstone, as a public man, was a most subtle and difficult person, always modifying his ideas and

¹²Ibid., 15.

¹³G. T. Garratt, The Two Mr. Gladstones. London: Macmillan & Co., 1936, 304.

¹⁴Knaplund, Gladstone and British Imperial Policy, 202.

¹⁵Hansard Parliamentary Debates, June 25, 1872, 3rd Series, CCXII, 217.

repeatedly shaking new patterns in the Parliamentary kaleidoscope."¹⁶ Instead of clinging firmly to his cherished ideals, Gladstone did frequently permit himself to be manipulated by the events of the time. In Garratt's words, Gladstone "sought his inspiration from without and deliberately allowed himself to be swayed by ...the Zeitgeist."¹⁷

In outlining its colonial policy in West Africa after 1885, the British Government, whether under Liberal or Conservative administration, emphasized the philanthropic and economic factors as the driving motives for the hinterland penetration. The Government has never given its real motive for the persistence with which it pursued the policy of interior expansion from 1885 to 1900. Rather, the often misleading and overemphasized reason was the desire for trade and the improvement of the social conditions of the native peoples--the stopping of the slave trade. Certainly these two motives were but sidelights to some other motive--the extension of British political authority on the west coast of Africa. Philanthropy and commercial enterprise were not the impelling motives for persistent British endeavor to penetrate into the hinterland of West Africa. If the commercial factor had been the primary incentive, the undertaking would have been abandoned, in keeping with British pragmatic politics. In 1885, commercial returns from the West African Colonies became increasingly meager. In 1884, for instance, the total value of the exports into West Africa (the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, and Nigeria) was £199,483; whereas in 1885 the total value of

¹⁶Garratt, vi.

¹⁷Ibid., viii.

exports was only £119,385.¹⁸ The Government wanted to achieve its aim by degrees through commerce, philanthropy, and moral influence. The inner motive of political aggrandizement was never expressed by the Government, but, in fact, the assumption of political control over the native peoples of West Africa was the ne plus ultra achievement of British policy in West Africa (1885-1900). One might therefore agree with Norman Harris that "the British Colonial Office seemed to know its mind; but it was 'afraid to take in hand any definite policy.'"¹⁹ The policy of hinterland expansion, however, was intensified by international rivalries on the west coast of Africa between 1882 and 1885. Nevertheless, the British Government could achieve its goal of political control by fraudulent removal of the native chiefs and kings thus establishing British political administration over the entire settlements.

¹⁸The Statesman's Year-Book: Statistical and Historical. London: Macmillan & Co., 1887, 293. One British pound sterling was equal to \$4.86,6 $\frac{1}{2}$ (U.S.). See The World Almanac. New York: Press Publishing Co., 1893, 67.

¹⁹Norman D. Harris, Intervention and Colonization in Africa. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914, 9.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PERIOD OF "INDIFFERENCE"

One of the pivotal principles of the Victorians regarding colonies was that colonies must be self-supporting. By the middle of the nineteenth century, this principle failed in its practical application. Parliament and public opinion had declared that financial responsibility in the administration and defense of the colonies should devolve on the colonies themselves. In 1865, however, the Imperial Government was spending not less than £ 320,000 per annum on the West African Settlements.¹ The increasing financial burden on the British taxpayer for the defense of the colonies became, therefore, decidedly unpleasant. As this was a "tax-hating" age, any improvident and useless expenditure which would involve increases in taxes was tenaciously resisted. If the colonies were not self-financing, it was felt,

...the dominant country can rarely succeed in compelling or inducing a dependency to contribute to the expenses of the supreme government; and, consequently, the dominant country generally defrays from its own resources the expenses caused by the protection of the dependency in peace and war....It may be added, that the possession of the dependency often proves a powerful incentive to improvident and useless expenditure on the part of the supreme government.²

Added to the vexing problem of financial responsibility resting on the Treasury and indirectly on the taxpayer, was the disturbing decline in West

¹Sir Alan Pim, The Financial and Economic History of the African Tropical Territories. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940, 22.

²Quoted in Klaus E. Knorr, British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1944, 351.

African trade. The average value of exports and imports (in £000's) from 1856-1860 was £915,000, whereas from 1861-65 the average fell to £664,000.³ The expansion of commerce was looked upon as an essential factor in the extension of British influence. Disillusionment came gradually as the trade returns from the colonies fell considerably. The revenue derived from the commercial enterprise formed a negligible proportion of British economy.⁴ The potentialities of the colonies in regard to trade did not therefore appear promising enough.

The commercial crisis synchronized with the period of the anti-imperialism campaign;⁵ the policy of the Government was therefore to withdraw from these "irritating hostages of fortune."⁶ As a result of the various problems in West Africa, the House of Commons appointed a Select Committee to examine and report how far local government in West Africa had succeeded in encouraging and protecting trade. Also, the Committee was to devise a plan for making the colonies self-supporting "without impairing efficiency." After conducting the inquiry the Committee resolved:

That all further extension of territory or assumption of Government, or new Treaties offering any protection to native tribes, would be inexpedient; and that the object of our policy should be to encourage in the natives the exercise of those qualities which may render possible for us more and

³McPhee, "Appendix A."

⁴John Hobson, "Imperialism: A Study," The New Imperialism. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1961, 9.

⁵C. A. Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism. London: Heinemann, 1960, 32-75; 79-89.

⁶Roland Robinson, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny, Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism. London: Macmillan & Co., 1961, 30. (Hereafter referred to as Robinson.)

more to transfer to them the administration of all the Governments, with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all, except, probably, Sierra Leone.⁷

The resolution to withdraw from the West African Settlements was governed by a tradition of frugality on the part of Parliament. It wanted colonies but no expenses. The influence of the Manchester School whose adherents had a bias against colonies because of the financial strain involved in maintaining them was still strong. Any enterprise which would strain Parliament's purse-strings to a breaking point was vehemently opposed. Even as late as 1866 the Chancellor of the Exchequer wrote:

Recall the African squadron; give up the settlements on the west coast, and we shall make a saving which will, at the same time, enable us to build ships and have a good budget. What is more, we shall have accomplished something definite, tangible, for the good of the country. In these days, more than ever, people look to results.⁸

All that the resolution proposed, in effect, was that "Britain should cut her colonial losses and concentrate on the more profitable regions where the gains of trade were not cancelled by the liabilities of rule."⁹

The report of the Select Committee had hardly been declared before it was nullified. Such "vulgar prejudice" for territorial abandonment was not to be as easy as that. Parliament, ironically enough, genuflected before the pressure of some civil servants, missionaries and merchants. These agents of

⁷British Sessional Papers, House of Commons, 1865, V, 3. (Hereafter referred to as British Sessional Papers.)

⁸George Earle Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli. London: Macmillan Co., 1929, IV, 476. For a full discussion on British attitude towards the West African Colonies see David Kinley, ed., The Fiscal and Diplomatic Freedom of the British Overseas Dominions. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922, chs. V and VI.

⁹Robinson, 30.

imperialism protested against what they termed "Little Englandism of Downing Street." In short, the West African Settlements were not abandoned. Penetration was continued. The traditional pragmatic politics of the Government--of concentrating attention where prospects of profits appeared bright, and jettisoning concerns whose future looked gloomy--was not adopted in this case.

The report of the Committee, evidently, did not represent the British Government's attitude towards West Africa. The document merely reflected

the views of those members of the House who were not merely
 sciologists in West African affairs but reflected in their
 opposition to expansion a widespread view of imperial policy;
 ...withdrawal whenever possible and retrenchment of expenditure everywhere.¹⁰

The emphasis placed on the report was not so much on withdrawing as on economy. The Committee was certainly composed of "those whose mental horizon was bounded by the academic teachings of the Manchester School," but who failed to perceive the political implications.

In any case, it would be erroneous to assume that national policies are made or shaped by parliamentary debates or recommendations. On the contrary, British colonial policies were often shaped by exchange of correspondence between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet members responsible for colonial affairs. The thesis is a simple one. The British Government had a definite policy; but it was temporarily reluctant to implement it until some auspicious moment arrived. To appreciate this fact, it is helpful to know the minds of British policy-makers. The answers given to the Committee by Mr. William H. Wyld, who was the Head of the Slave Trade Department in the Foreign Office

¹⁰K. O. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956, 166.

for ten years, will make clear the issue at stake: that political control of the colonies dominated the minds of those who shaped the national policy.

- Q. Has it not been the case, and is it not almost inevitable, that a great power like England, assuming the Government in such a country like West Africa, must maintain certain native powers against the others?
- A. Exactly; you cannot help that.
- Q. Should you say that for the interest of commerce and civilization it would have been almost better not to have so interfered, but to have left the natives to fight it out among themselves so that the strongest would finally become predominant?
- A. Probably that might be the best thing; but if you have an (commercial) establishment in some place, you cannot help interfering in the politics of the country.¹¹

The motive for British penetration in West Africa from 1885 to 1900 was not primarily economic but fundamentally political--Oberhoheit, as Mary Kingsley called it.¹² That is, "the power to rule at the top of things, the power to enforce peace among peoples,...to be king over kings, ruler over many peoples."¹³ This was the unexpressed inner motive. The thesis is supported by contemporary evidence--the policy of removing native rulers and replacing them with British Consuls or Commissioners.

When Gladstone took office as Liberal Prime Minister in 1880, he stuck firm to his principle of non-territorial annexation. The purpose of colonies, he said, should not be "the administrative connection, and the shadow of

¹¹British Sessional Papers, 1865, V, 412, QQ. 2713-15.

¹²Mary H. Kingsley, West African Studies. London: Macmillan & Co., 1901, 436.

¹³Ibid.

political subordination'."¹⁴ Territorial aggrandizement, he stressed, was not a legitimate object of ambition. His arguments reinforced the old prejudice against colonies in general. Annexations, he said, increase the burden of Government and the Government from year to year groans over the mass of work left undone.¹⁵ "The lust and love of territory have been among the greatest curses of mankind," Gladstone argued. He hated the idea of building "coloured" empires for the sake of empire-building. What Gladstone desired was the self-determination of the dependencies while the sentimental attachment was maintained. In 1882 he declared:

Throughout the whole of my political life, whether under Sir Robert Peel or as a Member of the Liberal Party, I cannot recollect an occasion on which I gave a vote or took a step in a controverted matter except on the side which was opposed to annexation.¹⁶

Gladstone's reluctance to annex, however, was by no means a rejection of control or influence. He said, "we ought to reduce, not our political influence, but our power over the Colonies to a minimum."¹⁷ Instances of Gladstone's denunciation of annexation policies can be multiplied. They are of little value. As has been said, "there is plenty of what is purely artificial in the political classification of men." Gladstone's pious and humane effusions are impressive but their application is another matter.

In his cabinet, of course, Gladstone had men who had sympathy for some

¹⁴William O. Aydelotte, Bismarck and British Colonial Policy, 1883-1885. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937, 6.

¹⁵Hansard Parliamentary Debates, June 25, 1872, 3rd Series, CCXII, 25.

¹⁶Hansard Parliamentary Debates, March 17, 1882, 3rd Series, CCLXVII, 1190.

¹⁷Knaplund, Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Policy, 61.

of his views. Lord Selborne, the Lord Chancellor, for example, "'had a very strong feeling against the tendency of European nations to appropriate and occupy countries inhabited by uncivilized or imperfectly civilized races, as if their inhabitants had no rights.'"¹⁸ On the other hand, however, Gladstone had strong opponents from the radical wing (imperialists) of the Cabinet. Sir Charles Dilke and Joseph Chamberlain were incongruous elements in his cabinet. Both represented what might be called the "new imperialism." Dilke glorified in the triumph of Saxondom--the triumph of English laws and English principles of government--"essential to the freedom of mankind."¹⁹ As for Chamberlain, England's rights and interests were to be protected under all circumstances and never hawked away--not a policy of peace at any price. The dominant issue in his mind was British prestige. An excerpt from his letter to a political colleague, Lord Morley, December 24, 1885, unearths his mind.

...I am sure you will not mind my writing frankly my opinions....
 The time has come when we ought to know and say exactly what we mean--and if we do not know, we ought to remain silent....
 The time will come, and probably soon when our differences of opinion must be made public....For the present I must lie low, and try not to commit myself, but I will not be dragged--even by Mr. Gladstone--into a policy the result of which I believe would be fatal to the greatness and influence of the country.²⁰

In the main, the influence of Gladstone over his colleagues was still strong by early 1882, but it was appreciably diminishing all the same due to certain political circumstances.

¹⁸Aydelotte, 7.

¹⁹Sir Charles Dilke, Greater Britain. London: Macmillan & Co., 1868, 565.

²⁰James L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain. London: Macmillan & Co., 1933, II, 147.

The "Scramble" for Africa beginning in the early 1880's, seriously altered Gladstone's policy toward West Africa. The period after 1882 when England occupied Egypt marked the end of an era of indifference and "wise silence" over the West African Settlements. As early as 1881 France and Germany had challenged British hegemony in West Africa. The French especially were active in Senegambia (between Senegal and Gambia) and were trying to engulf the British settlements of Gambia and Sierra Leone. The British Government was prepared to allow the French an "open door" in the Gambia because of its little commercial value. As for Sierra Leone, it was in no better shape than the Gambia economically. The Governor reported the decline of the commerce of Freetown.²¹ The merchants of Liverpool and London trading in the Gambia and Sierra Leone appealed to the Government to save the hinterlands from French invasion. Gladstone at this time did not think it expedient to interfere or to proclaim the areas "British Protectorates." He bided his time. Apart from the fact that intervention would involve heavy military expenditure, of which he felt these areas could not stand the strain,²² Gladstone was aware of the diplomatic risk involved. Such intervention, he thought, would strain the good relations between France and England. It would thus torpedo the Anglo-French modus vivendi in Egypt. Chamberlain even at this time admitted that England could not set up a colonial monopoly on the west coast. "If foreign nations are determined to pursue distant colonial enterprises," he said, "we have no right to prevent them. We cannot

²¹British Sessional Papers, 1890-1, LV, 161.

²²Ibid.

anticipate them in every case by proclaiming a universal protectorate.²³

Gladstone, himself, did not favor such a Monroe Doctrine in West Africa.

The Germans, too, were entering the colonial race in southwest Africa--in the Cameroons. This area had previously been rejected by the British; hence Gladstone did not care too much about German claims over in Angra Pequena. Chamberlain did not consider the Germans much of a threat. He recognized, of course, the value of the Cameroons to England. Dilke was not happy with Bismarck's seizure of the Cameroons but he admitted that German annexation was "not a bad thing for us;" it was "preferable to a French" seizure. On the whole, Gladstone's Government encouraged both the French and the German aspirations on the west coast just to divert their attention from Egypt and the Nile. England and France had agreed not to interfere in each other's spheres of influence--a standstill agreement of non-territorial annexation. As long as matters remained as they were, the West African problem was shelved.

But, what Harry Johnston described as "the spontaneous result of circumstance" caused a snap in the Anglo-French collaboration. The collapse of the Anglo-French entente in Egypt affected their relations in West Africa. Late in 1882 the British occupied Egypt. Hence, "it was the British invasion of Egypt which shattered...the general Anglo-French collaboration."²⁴ British action in Egypt exacerbated French feeling against the English. Consequently, France adopted a policy of pin-pricks in West Africa. She suspected that

²³Charles W. Boyd, ed., Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914, I, 136. Speech at Birmingham, January 5, 1885.

²⁴Robinson, 166.

Britain was then driving for an African Empire. The hitherto agreed modus vivendi was out of the question. Almost immediately France began to press on the Lower Niger. In an attempt to challenge Britain's preponderant position on the west coast, France entered the race of treaty-making with native rulers. Added to this, she began a campaign to convert her areas of influence into a unity. "France, for the first time," remarked Roberts, "proceeded to general definition of her African possessions."²⁵

In the Delta of the Congo, too, the French and Belgium challenged British trade. To distract the British Government further, the French minister, Ferry, appealed to Bismarck to join in the resistance to British West African control. In this he had hooked a very big fish. The overture was well-received. It came at a time when "the colonial question in Germany had taken a hold on the sentiment of the German People." Bismarck himself had his grievances against British policy for British colonial procedure "was extremely irritating to [him]."²⁶ So a Franco-German pressure brought a far-reaching change in the British policy of temporary indifference to territorial acquisition on the west coast of Africa. The British Government had then to "face the altered circumstances."

Under the pressure of international rivalry in West Africa, the distracted Gladstone Cabinet felt that action to forestall French and German encroachments had become urgent. Official commitment seemed inevitable. Though Gladstone had abjured colonial annexation without the free and expressed consent of the people who were being annexed, he eventually concurred in

²⁵Roberts, 303.

²⁶Aydelotte, 4.

"whatever is best in our time." The action taken by the Government was clear and specific: "to establish an efficient Consular Staff in the Niger and Oil Rivers Districts"²⁷ where British interest had been predominant. The Consuls were to make treaties with native chiefs and induce them to accept British protection;²⁸ that is, "to prevent the possibility of our trade being interfered with." Consul E. Hewett was to checkmate the action of the Germans in the Cameroons in treaty-making; but, on July 14, 1884, "the occupation of the Cameroons became official with the raising of the German flag in several towns of the new protectorate."²⁹ One week later Mr. Hewett arrived, too late to forestall the Germans, hence the nickname "Too Late Hewett."

The "Scramble" for possession of territory on the west coast of Africa was then in full swing. Though Gladstone did not consider the Germans as serious rivals as the French, he would not, at the same time, allow himself "to be bullied" by the chancellor's threats. Bismarck had appealed to the British Government for negotiations on the colonial question. For six months there was no reply. This tardiness on the part of the British Government irritated Bismarck. On September 1, 1884, Lord Granville (Colonial Secretary) in a letter to Mr. Gladstone informed him that "Bismarck is very

²⁷The "Oil Rivers District" was the vast Niger Delta between Lagos and the Cameroons--so-called because of the replacement of the slave trade by the oil trade on the Delta. The areas included are Benin, Escarvos, Warri, Forcados, Brass, St. Nicholas, St. Barbara, St. Bartholomew, Sambrero, New Calabar, Bonny, Andorio (St. Antonio), Opobo, Quo Ibo, Akpayafi, Oua, Cross, and Old Calaboar. E. Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty. London: Harrison & Sons, 1909, I, 155.

²⁸Robinson, 171.

²⁹Arthur Horton Cook, British Enterprise in Nigeria. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943, 120. The diplomacy of imperialism between England, France, and Germany in West Africa is treated in chapter IV--"International Rivalry."

angry" and would probably give "the Mandate of Europe to France."³⁰ Gladstone replied on September 2, 1884: "Bismarck's fuming does not much alarm me. Turkey and Italy would be fair allies against a mandate to France; nor am I sure that Russia would join in it."³¹ Gladstone, however, was "sorry" that delay "may lead to perplexity." By September 24, 1884, Bismarck had not received any answer from the British Government. Count Herbert Bismarck, Bismarck's son and Ambassador in England, put it to Lord Granville that "repeated proofs of the insincere attitude of the English Cabinet would force us to look elsewhere for support."³²

Bismarck took advantage of the diplomatic difficulties in which Great Britain was involved and the exposed situation of France to control the action of both. He carefully guarded against furnishing both with a common cause against Germany. While he was imperious toward Great Britain, his correspondence with France was quite conciliatory. He broached to M. de Courcel, the French Minister at Berlin, the question of the freedom of navigation of the Congo and the Niger and of convening an international conference to this end.³³ He suggested that the United States, Great Britain, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain be invited to take part in the deliberations. The suggestion made by Bismarck was agreed to by France. Having been denied the "open door" on the Niger, France felt that

³⁰Agatha Ramm, editor, The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962, II, 241.

³¹Ibid., 244.

³²Garvin, I, 497.

³³Daniel DeLeone, "The Conference at Berlin on the West-African Question," Political Science Quarterly. New York: Ginn & Co., 1886, 1:126.

a prospect was now opened to her to enjoy the coveted privilege of equal treatment on the Niger. It was on the concurrence of both Governments (France and Germany) that the international conference known as the "Berlin Conference" was convened. Information was issued from Berlin to other European Powers. Britain accepted the invitation. The matters to be discussed were specific: first, the question of freedom of commerce in the basin and at the mouth of the Congo; second, the application to the Congo and the Niger of the principles adopted at the Congress of Vienna (freedom of navigation on several international rivers); and third, the establishment of formalities to be observed in order to render effective future occupation on the west coast of Africa. Though the questions to be discussed involved collective interests of a number of states, they were more particularly vital to Germany.

Diplomatic in form, it was economic in fact; ostensibly international in its bearing, in truth it concerned but one nation; and it was designed to help to solve for that nation only, a strictly social problem.³⁴

It was perhaps the popular public opinion in favor of colonies and the fear of French revanche of the events of 1870 that eventuated Bismarck's interest in the colonial question. As A. J. P. Taylor correctly observed, Bismarck's sudden interest in colonies was more than a mere change of mind. It was a purposeful policy, deliberate in design, and executed with the rare diplomatic skill so clearly exemplified by the Iron Chancellor.³⁵

The Conference met at Berlin on November 15, 1885. Almost all important states of Europe, except Switzerland and Greece, were represented. The United States' delegation also sat with other European Powers in a diplomatic

³⁴Ibid., 1:103.

³⁵A. J. P. Taylor, Germany's First Bid for Colonies, 1884-1885. London: Macmillan & Co., 1938, passim.

conference in Europe. Prince Bismarck was the chairman of the conference. The conference went to work immediately on the issues that were presented to it. According to DeLeone, "the rapidity with which it disposed of these points showed that the principal part of its labors was accomplished before it had met."³⁶ The rapidity with which a common accord was reached did not, however, exclude elaborate discussion or controversy. The question of applying the principles adopted at the Congress of Vienna to the Niger was strongly resisted by the British delegation. British objection to control by an international commission on the Niger was upheld by the Russian delegate, Count Kapnist, who, DeLeone described as the "watch-dog of the conference" because of his independent position.³⁷ It was due to the soundness of his arguments, DeLeone affirmed, that the General Act of the Conference was purged of all generalizations and the Niger subjected to a different regimen.

The decisions of the Conference were embodied in General Acts of the Conference. The Acts were later ratified by all the states except the United States and the ratification was deposited at the Berlin Foreign Office. Articles 13 and 26 of the General Act provided for freedom of navigation of the Congo and the Niger respectively. While the enforcement of the Act on the navigation of the Congo was to be the responsibility of an international commission, the enforcement on the Niger was to be undertaken by Britain and France in their own spheres of the Niger (Articles 30 and 31). The "Act of Navigation on the Niger" stated:

³⁶DeLeone, 1:128.

³⁷Ibid., 1:131.

The navigation of the Niger, without excepting any of its branches or outlets, is and shall remain entirely free for the merchant ships of all nations equally, whether with cargo or in ballast, for the transportation of goods and passengers. It shall be regulated by the provisions of this Act of Navigation, and by the Rules to be made in pursuance of this Act.³⁸

An important provision of the Berlin Act was article 35 which empowered the competitors for territories on the west coast of Africa to protect their existing rights in the territories hitherto occupied on the coast. The Act stated:

The Signatory Powers of the Present Act recognize the obligation to insure the establishment of authority in regions occupied by them on the coast of the African Continent sufficient to protect existing rights, and, as the case may be, freedom of trade and of transit under the conditions agreed upon.³⁹

It was this provision of "effective occupation" that made the British Government proclaim the Lower Niger, where her interest had been planted, a British Protectorate. So, remarked Harris, "Great Britain, at length, under the pressure of these French and German activities, realized the necessity of a definite policy of expansion in West Africa, and of marking out promptly the future field of her operations."⁴⁰ In effect, the Lower Niger was recognized as being a British sphere of influence and the Upper Niger was regarded as a French sphere.

³⁸Hertslet, II, 481.

³⁹Ibid., 485.

⁴⁰Harris, 133. See also Robinson, 171.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ERA OF CONTINENTAL EXPANSION

For some decades, the British had made repeated attempts to penetrate the hinterland (that is, the interior beyond the coast) of the four British colonies on the west coast of Africa. Such attempts proved unsuccessful because of the incessant resistance and hostility of the natives and the impregnable impediments posed by nature--unfavorable climate of the West Coast and lack of good roads. The period from 1885 to 1900 could then be regarded as a watershed in British colonial policy in West Africa. The year 1885 marked the end of British "indifference" and hesitation about a definite involvement in colonial annexation on the west coast of Africa. The period, in fact, opened up a new chapter in the Anglo-West African relations--the era of Continental Expansion.¹ The term "continental expansion" signifies the penetration of the hinterland of West Africa, the extension of British administration beyond the coast, and the building of roads, railways, harbors, and other means of communication for the promotion of British trade and administration.

It was indicated earlier that British slowness and apparent reluctance to annex territories on the west coast of Africa was not due to lack of interest. On the contrary, Britain abjured territorial annexation on the ground that the keeping of the colonies involved a heavy financial burden. This reason for refusing to annex more territory did not explain the real

¹McPhee, 4.

fact. The economic factor was not the major reason for territorial self-denial. The crucial and patent fact was that British supremacy on the west coast of Africa was not challenged to such a degree that it demanded her taking immediate action to defend her colonial interests in these areas. When, between 1882 and 1885, the French and Germans challenged British hegemony on the west coast by claiming territories in what had been safely a British sphere of influence, Britain at last started to modify her colonial policy in West Africa. Lord Salisbury's speech in the House of Commons in 1890 supported this view. He said:

Up to ten years ago we remained masters of Africa, practically, or the greater part of it, without being put to the inconvenience of protectorates or anything of that sort, by the simple fact that we were masters of the sea....So much was that the case that we left enormous stretches of coast to the native rulers in full confidence that they would go on under native rulers and in the hope that they would gradually acquire their own proper civilization without any interference.

Then suddenly, we found out that that position however convenient, had no foundation in international law....²

It was therefore no more a case of leaving the people to themselves to shape their own destiny. Outside forces contributed to the British Government's adopting a new colonial policy in West Africa. It would be inexpedient, the Government felt, to stand in silent acquiescence while other Powers pegged out territories on the west coast. Hence the British Government abandoned the old policy of non-annexation. British hesitation in annexing colonies in West Africa could also be explained by the complexity of the governmental process for the approval of foreign policies. For a really important measure of policy, the Cabinet had to give its approval. On many

²Lady Gwendolen, The Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury, IV, 225.

occasions, the views of many of the members of the Cabinet varied widely. This method of procedure in foreign affairs was a serious impediment to quick action. Lord Salisbury realized this difficulty when, in 1886, he wrote to Queen Victoria:

There is much else that weakens our diplomacy--our shifting foreign policy during the last ten years--our precarious Governments, the necessity of adapting our foreign policy to the views of a Cabinet of fourteen or sixteen men, usually ignorant of it and seldom united in their views.³

One unfortunate aftermath of the Berlin Conference was "an intensification of the race for empire" on the west coast of Africa. The English, the French, and the Germans were seriously campaigning for possessions on the west coast in 1885. Gladstone noted in his diary that the year was "a time of Sturm und Drang."⁴ This was so. The French and the Germans were pressing from the Upper Niger and the Cameroons respectively. The members of Gladstone's Cabinet stood for a positive, forward policy in West Africa. What Gladstone feared was that a mishandling of the colonial issue could lead to the division and possible break up of the Cabinet and the solidarity of the party as a whole. In a letter to Lord Granville on January 22, 1885, Gladstone wrote: "I admit that from various symptoms it is not improbable there may be a plan or intention to break up the party."⁵ The majority of the Cabinet recognized the terms of the Berlin Conference as having given the British Government a semblance of effective occupation on the Lower Niger. Granville and some other Radicals were anxious to safeguard the Lower Niger

³G. E. Buckle, ed., Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd Series. London: John Murray, 1930, I, 195.

⁴Morley, 170.

⁵Ramm, II, 326.

for the "extension of official control."⁶ Gladstone seemed to have no alternative but to abide by popular opinion. By Orders in Council of March 26, 1885, the British Government proclaimed the Oil Rivers Districts a British Protectorate.⁷ The proclamation was followed by effective occupation. Administrative officials were sent out with instructions to open up trade, stop the slave trade, and make treaties with native chiefs. The political authority of the officials was so extensive that local rulers who opposed the intrusion of the British were at the mercy of the administrators.⁸ Local chiefs who resisted the new administrative authority were to be tried by the British Government officials and, if found uncompromising, deposed. Sir Harry Johnston, later a Vice-Consul on the Oil Rivers, was sent out to survey the potentialities of the hinterland. His report was full of romance and prospects. He was "struck" with the "beauty" and magnificent vegetation of the Oil Rivers Districts and hoped that the area "might become a 'white city' in course of time."⁹ The delimitation of the geographical boundary of the Protectorate was delayed until June of the same year. In pursuance of the new policy of colonial expansion, the government staked their interest according to priorities. The Lower Niger appeared potentially more attractive than other areas on the coast. "Here," Robinson said, "was the region with the best trade. Here was the best waterway into the interior. Here lay the best

⁶Edmund Fitzmaurice, The Life of Granville, 2nd Earl of Granville, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1906, II, 341.

⁷British State Papers, 1884-5, LXXVI, 960.

⁸Ibid., 966-977.

⁹Sir Harry Johnston, The Story of My Life. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1923, 84-85.

opportunity of breaking the power of the African middlemen."¹⁰

In the meantime, however, the French were pressing forward from the Upper Niger, from the Ivory Coast, and from Dahomey into the Gold Coast (regions north of Ashanti).¹¹ British merchants requested protection of their commerce from the home Government. The government, though not totally indifferent to her interests in the Gambia, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast, did not intervene immediately in response to the appeals of merchants. It adopted a "good neighbor policy" calculated at obviating potential European war. To the south of the region of the Lower Niger, administrative agents under the leadership of the Consul-General explored the entire area and negotiated treaties with the natives. The area north of the Lower Niger, however, where the National African Company had been trading for some decades, was left to the management of the Company. The Company had in 1881 applied for a royal charter to administer the hinterland of the Lower Niger but was refused by the government. Sir Taubman Goldie,¹² the heart and soul of the Company, boasted that "energetic and unceasing political work was at the root of success." His economic enterprise was fused with political groundwork which was later to be exploited by the Government.

In 1882 when international rivalry raged in West Africa, Goldie tried to induce the Imperial Government to declare the hinterland of the Lower Niger occupied. The suggestion was turned down and to the government he was

¹⁰Robinson, 177.

¹¹See map facing p. ii.

¹²Sir Goldie Taubman, better known as Sir Taubman Goldie, was the principal agent of the National African Company. His activities in Northern Nigeria are treated more fully in chapter 6.

no more than "a reckless and expendable intruder." By 1884, as the "Scramble" for territories on the west coast of Africa became feverishly serious, Goldie emerged as a man of consequence to the policy-makers. He warned the Government about the new threat to British interests: stating that "it would be suicidal to abandon to a rival power the only great remaining undeveloped opening for British goods." The best way of keeping his monopoly in the hinterland lay in his company's seizing political control of the area--thus laying the foundations of future British Empire in Nigeria. The Foreign Office considered it a better method of expansion to entrust Goldie's Company with the power of administration rather than for the Government to exercise direct rule. An Assistant Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, Villiers Lister, wrote:

[The Company] ...is perfectly able to discharge the duties of administration for which H[er] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] have become responsible, and unless it sh[oul]d go to the great expense of setting up the machinery of gov[ernmen]t upon the two rivers where the Co[mpany] now rules supreme, there seems to be no other course open, and certainly no better one, than that of legalizing and affirming the position of the Co[mpany] and placing the business of administration into its hands.¹³

Such an argument was comforting to the parsimonious Gladstone who could quiet his conscience by transferring government business to a Company that would pay the expenses. On February 12, 1885, the Company submitted a formal application for a grant of royal charter. Later a rather seductive picture of the inland regions was submitted to the Government. The prospects seemed promising. Lord Aberdare, Governor of the Royal Niger Company, wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Granville, that the prospects were "not only probable

¹³Quoted from Robinson, 180-182. Memo by Villier Lister, January 30, 1885, F.O. 84/1879.

but certain that their existing trade, large as it is, will speedily be developed in proportions and directions hitherto unexpected."¹⁴ The prospects admittedly opened a gorgeous vista to the policy-makers. The correspondence and memoranda relating to the proposed charter were voluminous. Almost all ministers wrote favorable memos and believed mistakenly that the charter would involve no new commitment.

The Foreign Office timetable was now drawn up. First, the "Niger Districts," that is, the hinterland region of the Lower Niger, and the Cameroons must be delimited. Second, there was to be notification to foreign rivals of the acquisition of a protectorate according to the Berlin Act, and third, the granting of the charter. On June 5, 1885, the Niger Districts were declared a British protectorate and the limits defined.

The British Protectorate of the Niger Districts comprises the territories on the line of coast between the British Protectorate of Lagos and the right or western river bank of the mouth of the Rio del Rey. It further comprises the territories on both banks of the Niger, from its confluence with the River Benue at Lokoja to the sea, as well as territories on both banks of the river Benue from the confluence up to and including Ibi.¹⁵

This special set marked the genesis of exclusive British influence on the Niger Districts. Its significance is two-fold: it heralded British extension of political influence in the hinterland and also symbolized a technique of colonial exploitation--the Divide et Impera policy. Notification of the occupation was published in the London Gazette, June 5, 1885. There remained

¹⁴Robinson, 181. Lord Aberdare (F.O.) to Lord Granville Colonial Secretary), Feb. 13, 1885.

¹⁵British Sessional Papers, 1886, LXXVII, 1022. See also Hertslet, I, 123.

the granting of the charter.

The drafting of the charter aroused serious controversy. The negotiating machinery almost broke down. Goldie demanded a monopoly; the Berlin Act had decreed freedom of navigation of the Niger River. So the British government in negotiating with Goldie was undecided on the degree of official control he should have. Goldie even threatened that he would sell the Company and all its rights to a foreign power. He argued that the restrictions imposed by the Berlin Act applied only to the river, and that the British Government possessed complete freedom of action in the interior. Nevertheless, the charter lay unratified in May when the Gladstone Government fell. It was not until Gladstone's return to power that the charter was granted on June 25, 1886, by Orders in Council.¹⁶ The Company was chartered as the National African Company but assumed the name Royal Niger Company on July 13, 1886.¹⁷ The powers of the Company were extensive and as comprehensive as possible, thus making it, in fact, the advance guard of British imperialism.¹⁸ The Company was given political authority to make treaties with the natives, to administer the entire region within its jurisdiction and also to wield commercial powers. By the terms of the regulations, the Government had in fact bestowed on the Company complete monopoly rights in both trade and administration. The Government had stated that "Nothing in this our charter shall be deemed to authorize the Company to set up or grant any monopoly of

¹⁶British Sessional Papers, 1886, LXXVII, 1022.

¹⁷Cook, British Enterprise in Nigeria. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943, 89, footnote 23.

¹⁸The activities of the Company are treated in Chapter 6.

trade." Robinson remarked:

The granting of political authority meant that government was giving back to Goldie with one hand the monopoly it had taken away with the other. It was too much to expect that once he had been conceded jurisdiction, he would concede competition. The company actually needed the monopoly.¹⁹

Within its sphere of authority the Company was to collect customs duties from all traders. The regulation stated:

No vessel, boat, canoe, or other craft entering the waters of the Niger Territories from without may touch, load, or discharge at, from, or into any part of these territories without having first cleared at Akassa at the mouth of the River Niger, ...[or] Lokoja at the confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue....And if any vessel, boat, canoe, or other craft shall in any way contravene this Regulation, it shall be liable to seizure and forfeiture.²⁰

The duties were to be collected ad valorem at Akassa and at Lokoja. Any attempt by importers to defraud the Company by having the goods invoiced at a lower price than their real value was to be punished by the Company's taking over the goods and paying the importer the invoiced prices, plus two per cent of such prices. The schedule of charges was drawn by the Government and the Company was not allowed to make any changes at all. Added to the overwhelming commercial power of the Company was the "Regulation No. XXXVI of 1891." On the pretext of suppressing the "intolerable evil"--that is, the slave traffic, the power and authority of the Company was increased considerably. It was permitted to increase its military force, which was "hitherto ... numerically insufficient." Humanitarian sentiment seemed to clothe the economic interest--the ever-advancing raids of Fellah slave hunters, which,

¹⁹Robinson, 183.

²⁰British and Foreign State Papers, 1894-1895, LXXXVII, 918.

"if unchecked, entirely [would] destroy the newly-created commerce of those fertile regions."²¹

It can be seen from the foregoing that the chartering of the Royal Niger Company in 1886 marked the turn in the tide. British policy in West Africa was now to be

...veiled under the guise of a semi-private enterprise. Public opinion was not yet prepared for an open avowal of the forward policy of continental expansion in British West Africa, and the Chartered Company form of administration was adopted until public opinion had changed sufficiently, so that the Imperial Government could take control without protest.²²

This was exactly the case. The Company was being used as a trailblazer, which was to lay the foundation of eventual British administration in Northern Nigeria. Lieutenant Hourst, the French colonial agent aptly delineated the Royal Niger Company as "the screen behind which England hides herself."²³

²¹Ibid., 929.

²²McPhee, 22-23.

²³Lieutenant Hourst, Exploration of the Niger. London: Chapman and Hall, 1899, 487, translated by Mrs. Arthur Bell (N. D'Anvers).

CHAPTER THREE

ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM

In 1895 Frederick Engels wrote about development of colonial policy. "Colonization," he said, "is simply a department of the Stock Exchange in whose interests the European Powers a few years ago divided up Africa."¹ The period from the 1880's marked a new phase in the economic transition of West Africa. As the slave trade declined, a new trade sprang up to take its place. On the Niger and Oil Rivers districts, in the Gold Coast, and in Sierra Leone the palm oil and palm kernel oil had received a tremendous stimulus. In the Gambia the groundnut oil (peanut oil) was important, too. The trade in these vegetable oils was indeed phenomenal; hence the change has been described as an "Economic Revolution." Men of entrepreneurial ability defied the "miasmatic and poisonous mists" of West Africa and so "British West Africa [was] dragged into the vortex of the modern international economic mechanism, and thus became a co-operator in the economic commonwealth of the world."²

¹Cited in R. P. Dutt, The Crisis of Britain and the Empire. New York: International Publishers Co., 1953, 51.

²McPhee, 2. See *Ibid.*, Appendix A for the revenue from the West African trade from 1885-1900.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Average value of exports and imports</u>
1876-80	£ 3,020,000
1881-85	3,028,000
1886-90	2,707,000
1891-95	4,166,000
1896-1900	6,266,000

The trade slump after 1885 has already been discussed.

Sir Harry Johnston, the Vice-Consul on the Oil Rivers Districts, after his tour of West Africa and East Africa wrote in the London Times:

The great tropical continent must be exploited by the white races....The time has come--nay, unfortunately the time was, some several years ago--when we should as a nation and Government definitely decide on our African policy,...with the foreseeing view of making every future act and incident and opportunity fit in with the scheme we had laid down.³

The economic potentials of the West African territories fascinated him to such an extent that he could not but speak out his mind. His suggestion that the tropical continent be exploited by the white races was not a mere brain wave. Its significance had quite an impact on policy-makers. The method to be used, however, was to be like that of the South Sea Company of "carrying on an undertaking of great advantages, but nobody to know what it is." The driving force of the new era of economic colonization was what Dutt called the desire for "super profit," that is, to make a higher rate of profit. This, in the Marxian view, could take place on a basis of "pure" economic exchange without any element of political domination. Perhaps this was what Salisbury meant when, on January 28, 1898, he wrote to the British Ambassador in Paris, Edmund Monson, stating that the object of British penetration was "not territory, but facility to trade."⁴ But the technique of exploitation was another matter. The close alliance between the Government and chartered companies--particularly the Royal Niger Company--introduced a new colonial policy. The new company's practice was, in fact,

³London Times, "Great Britain's Policy in Africa," Aug. 22, 1888, 8.

⁴G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914. London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1927, I, 139.

...to utilize its state machinery to establish political dominion or control, direct or indirect, over the backward country; including with the use of armed force, in order to establish for itself as far as possible a monopoly hold on the particular country as a market, a source of raw materials and a sphere of investment, and so to insure a special favored position for the extraction of maximum super-profit.⁵

Without doubt the Industrial Revolution had brought with it complex needs. The growing demand for oil and fat led to the new incentive to penetrate the interior of the west coast of Africa. There was, however, another motive. The African middlemen had been accepted by European merchants as the promoters of West African trade. They brought the products from the interior at a comparatively cheap price and sold them to the merchants at the coast at a higher price, thus making some reasonable profit. Now as the oil trade expanded, the British merchants wanted to eliminate the intermediary position of the African traders and so obtain the products directly from the producers at a lesser price. Naturally such a practice would inevitably bring conflicts for any attempt to go behind the middlemen was strongly and usually successfully opposed. Johnston's account of his experience in the Oil Rivers explains why these middlemen were so tenacious in upholding their trade monopoly:

The Oil Rivers Protectorate ...was at first administered by consular authority and by the author of this book, who found himself obliged to face a serious difficulty in the determined opposition of certain coast chiefs to the carrying on of direct trade with the interior. These were the 'middle-men,' who had for several centuries prevented the penetration of Africa from the west coast by Europeans, in the dread that they would lose their lucrative commission on the products of the interior which they retailed on the coast. Some of these chiefs were of long established ruling families; others again had commenced life as slaves and had risen to be wealthy merchant-kings with incomes of £ 30,000 to £ 50,000 a year, derived from their

⁵Dutt, 52.

profits on the goods from the interior which passed through their hands.⁶

The effort made to establish direct trade with the people of the interior to avoid the exactions of middlemen, was one of the ugly episodes of the history of West Africa after 1885. The trade in West Africa suffered a slump in 1885 due to the hostility of the natives towards British penetration into the hinterlands. As Salmon remarked, the extension of territory beyond the coast usually stifled the pre-existing trade with inland people. The reason for the decline in trade was not only because of the hostility to and fear of the British intruders, but also because of the policy adopted by the British. In order to "promote" trade (which really involved displacing the time-honored position of the local chiefs), the British administrators, "fall, always invariably, into the hands of a local clique of some kind."⁷ The British were in fact looked upon by people of the interior as enemies because the pattern of inland advance did not represent a true intention to diminish wars and local feuds. It was, of course, futile to attempt to manage Africans except through their selected chiefs. If the administrative agents had been genuinely committed to reconciling the disputes of various tribes, with a view to extending their influence and trade, the story would have been different. What happened was, that as soon as some adjacent tribe or chief became more powerful than its or his neighbor, and threatened to assume a preponderant influence, the local British administration did its best to stop

⁶Harry Johnston, The Colonization of Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899, 115.

⁷Salmon, "Our West African Settlements," Contemporary Review. September, 1885, 48:374.

this Power.⁸ A classic example of such a case was the attempt of the chief of Kumasi (Gold Coast) to assume a preponderant influence over the Ashanti territory. The British administrators considered such assumption of power detrimental to their political and commercial interests. Thus, usually, they allied with disgruntled and dissident groups in dislocating the pretensions of the local chief. This practice of subjugation of native chiefs, thereby creating a power vacuum, gave rise to incessant wars. As the chiefs were eventually defeated, the British automatically filled the power vacuum which they had helped to create.

The Royal Niger Company was, of course, using all the authority invested in it to make a breakthrough and extend its trade monopoly into the interior. It started by negotiating treaties with the natives of the hinterland and by 1892 it had made over 360 treaties with some native chiefs. These treaties were approved by the Foreign Office.⁹ The method of getting around these treaties was quite notorious because the Royal Niger Company took advantage of the ignorance of the people. As Cook remarked,

...these treaties were often obtained in a questionable manner. Native rulers were accustomed to making treaties without understanding their importance. In many cases the tribal chiefs had no power to dispose of common rights, and the legal verbiage of the approved treaty forms could not be translated by ill-educated interpreters.¹⁰

Form No. 5 prepared beforehand was frequently used. It stated:

We, the undersigned Chiefs of _____, with the view to the bettering of the condition of our country and

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Hertslet, I, 156. The Treaties were approved by the Secretary of State, Earl of Kimberley, April 23, 1894.

¹⁰ Cook, 126.

people, do this day cede to the Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited), for ever, the whole of our territory extending from _____.¹¹

The terms of the treaty were explained to the chiefs by an interpreter after which the chiefs "signed" their signature--usually by a finger print. It is true that the chiefs signed the treaties. It would be idle to contend, however, that the chiefs had voluntarily signed away their rights. Nor did such cessions by the local chiefs bestow full powers of ownership to the prospector. "No [foreign] government," Cook observed, "really derived its powers from the chiefs but became sovereign through the employment of superior force."¹² In any case, such a pattern of territorial acquisition gave the Company an overwhelming monopolistic power. The monopoly of the Company provoked bitterness and complaint from the natives and from foreign traders.¹³ Other foreign traders justifiably described Goldie as an arriviste whose advent and intrusion had challenged the pre-eminence of other companies. In due course, the rankling discontent of the native traders, whose business had declined because of the Company's monopoly, exploded into violent rioting and looting of the Company's stations in 1895.¹⁴

In pursuance of its "active interior policy," the British Government chose to identify its interests with those of the Royal Niger Company. In a letter to Mr. Egerton, British Secretary of Legation at Paris, Salisbury

¹¹Hertslet, I, 145. See full text in the Appendix.

¹²Cook, 127.

¹³London Times, November 25, 1889, 5. Protest by German merchants through Herr Von Puttkamer, German Chargé d'Affaires in London.

¹⁴See Chapter 6 for full treatment of the "Akassa Raid."

wrote on August 10, 1890, "In this matter the interests of this country are the interests of the Royal Niger Company."¹⁵ Having identified the interests of the country with those of the Company, Salisbury could afford to pay the Company's deficits by grants-in-aid.¹⁶ He quieted his conscience by adopting a principle of helping merchants (those in the Royal Niger Company) who helped themselves without using much Government funds. In another letter to Lord Dufferin, he wrote on March 30, 1892:

...The spirit and energy of the Royal Niger Company have, without expenditure of Imperial funds, or the sacrifice of the life of a single British soldier, placed under the protection of the Crown, the whole of the Lower, a great portion of the Central, Niger, and its affluent, the Benue, up to Yola. The Company has concluded treaties with the powerful Sultan of Sokoto, and with the Sultan of Gandu, whose power extends over vast territories on both sides of the Niger. On the rivers an effective administration has been established, and security is maintained by patrolling steamers and police.¹⁷

Salisbury and his Conservative Government had been fully committed to the "interior policy" on the Lower Niger. In a letter to Sir Clare Ford, March 2, 1892, he indicated, "...The English people will never withdraw its hand from the steady and vigorous prosecution and the benefit of the ... undertaking with which now it is their pride and honor to be connected."¹⁸ As for the Government the Royal Niger Company had made a great and impressive

¹⁵Lady Gwendolen, Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury, IV, 320.

¹⁶British Sessional Papers, 1899, LVIII, 37-48.

¹⁷British Sessional Papers, 1892, LVI, 778.

¹⁸Lady Gwendolen, IV, 394.

success.¹⁹ For this reason the Government could afford to yield so much elsewhere but never on the Niger. The complaints of merchants in the Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Gold Coast were unanswered till the time of Joseph Chamberlain who became Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1895. Salisbury was content to use diplomacy to improve the relations between his Government and those of France, Germany, and Portugal. The French, Salisbury recognized, were the greatest danger and enemy of the English in West Africa. They sent explorers, traders, and administrators to Timbuctoo, the Upper Niger, the Gambia, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast. Clashes between English and French administrators were frequent. British administrators charged French traders and administrators with attacking native chiefs with whom they had concluded treaties; French nationals counter-charged by accusing English men of hoisting their flag within sight of French cantonments. In a rather lengthy letter

¹⁹The Statistics of the Company's revenues are quite impressive. See British Sessional Papers, 1901, LXXXVI, 988. Territory Administered by the R. N. C.: Statistics, 1887-98 (in £'s sterling). One pound equals 4.86 dollars.

<u>Finance</u>			<u>Trade</u>	
<u>Years</u>	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Imports</u>	<u>Exports</u>
1887	42,396	71,324	73,819	223,450
1888	55,771	73,830	120,878	230,073
1889	57,652	82,870	139,465	260,846
1890	62,430	92,258	180,692	286,200
1891	89,667	107,975	224,729	335,000
1892	103,155	107,115	181,012	341,800
1893	110,756	99,255	159,989	405,935
1894	74,160	104,001	(
1895	87,806	108,963	(
1896	102,330	117,905	("Cannot be stated"
1897	94,045	135,637	(
1898	113,305	135,093	(

Johnston had suggested to Salisbury the importance of consolidating both the French and English spheres of influence in West Africa for "a long overdue measure of economy." He argued that the absorption of the territories could forestall "outside aggression." He went on,

...these little wedges of foreign territory serve as bases from which the French and Germans can penetrate into the interior at the back of our colonies, and keep the colonial governments perpetually in a state of anxiety by their intrigues with the border tribes,...Now if we close up the gaps in the coastline between Sierra Leone and the German boundary at Rio del Rey, we could just sit down comfortably and develop our coast influence.²⁰

Even in his Times article of August 22, 1888, Johnston had chafed at the "petty policy" of the House of Commons of refusing to annex territories. This, he said, is unfortunate for if it had been done earlier, the "vexatious questions perplexing us and obstacles to our progress ...would never have existed."²¹ In yet another letter he put it to Salisbury that:

...The foundation of our West African Empire would be a splendid stroke of policy, which the nation would not readily forget, and which it would associate with the jealous care of Imperial interests for which our Lordship's administration has always been distinguished.²²

Salisbury was quite aware of these "frontiers open in the rear" of the colonies.²³ But he contended that a "pacific policy" would be more expedient than forcible enclosure. In his calculation, military intervention, which

²⁰Quoted in Roland Oliver, Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa. London: Chatto and Windus, 1958, 135. It was not possible to get access to the Johnston Letters.

²¹Times, Aug. 22, 1888, 8.

²²Quoted in Oliver, 136; Johnston to Salisbury, October 24, 1888.

²³British Sessional Papers, 1892, LVI, 778.

the closing of the gaps involved, would be expensive and might not even be sanctioned by Parliament. Therefore his doctrine that "diplomacy cometh not by observation" was to be put into action. On August 10, 1899, the Anglo-French agreement was signed which delimited the boundaries and field of influence of both Governments. The Anglo-French territorial rancor seemed to be temporarily eased. The agreement did not last long, however, before fresh disputes over spheres of influence arose. Resort to open warfare which Salisbury ever dreaded was obviated by another diplomatic agreement on June 9, 1890. Both Governments agreed to appoint a Joint Commission to look into the matter in respect of spheres of influence in the Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Gold Coast. In spite of British concessions (given with a view of avoiding complications in Egypt), France remained intractable. The Agreement of 1890 was a mere makeshift agreement. In 1892, British merchants were complaining of French forays into their areas of trade, which depleted resources of the British area. In a letter to the Foreign Office the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce complained:

In West Africa the British Governments of the last decade have been outstripped by Germany and France: the Gambia has dwindled; the Cameroons have been lost; two foreign powers have intervened between Lagos and Gold Coast Colonies--which colonies should have been coterminous--the French have opened themselves over Senegambia, and the British Governments have yielded the districts of the Northern Rivers of Sierra Leone ...the Chamber is of the opinion that wherever in the unappropriated territories of Africa a preponderance of British trade existed, their British interests should have been secured, by proclaiming such territories spheres of British influence.²⁴

The proddings of merchants and administrators and the territorial

²⁴Quoted by Robinson, 382. Liverpool Chamber of Commerce to Foreign Office, August 22, 1893.

hustle between the English and the French did accentuate British interior policy. In the Gold Coast Salisbury thought it appropriate to anticipate the French. Treaties were concluded with the chiefs of Dagomba, Gondja, Mossi and Gourounsi. These "paper fences" were calculated to bar the French and Germans access to the interior. The treaties bound the chiefs to have no dealings with other Powers but promised nothing in return.²⁵ Between 1889 and 1898 West Africa was indeed a troubled arena for gladiators of empire--those of the crowned company and those of the army of the republic. The British Government yielded considerable grounds in the Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Gold Coast, but never in the Lower Niger. The concessions to the French and Germans, as indicated earlier resulted from British determination to have all in Egypt. As Salisbury informed the Queen later, "No offer of territorial concession in Egypt on our part would be endured by public opinion."²⁶ The French and the Germans, Salisbury firmly held, should not be given any place in Egypt because "we should insist on the command of all affluents of the Nile."²⁷ Salisbury was often willing to hawk the Gambia to France for a free hand in Egypt. On the Lower Niger, never. "A great British Niger Empire," Johnston said, "will rival India in its wealth of products and its teeming, industrious population."²⁸

²⁵ Robinson contended that the "paper claims, so negative in content, so easily yielded, show the feeble imperial interest in the Gold Coast hinterland before 1895." 386.

²⁶ George E. Buckle, ed., Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd Series, II, 290. Salisbury to Queen Victoria, Oct. 3, 1898.

²⁷ Lady Gwendolen, IV, 330.

²⁸ Oliver, 135. Johnston to Salisbury, Sept. 29, 1888.

In July, 1892, Salisbury's Ministry fell. Gladstone (Liberal) returned to office. His return, however, did not alter the policy. The Anglo-French duel over territories in West Africa still continued. The French were making ambitious forays into the Niger bend, another conflict flared up over Lake Chad--north east of the Royal Niger Company's sphere of influence. For the same reasons as those of the Salisbury government, the Gladstone Government backed Goldie. By 1893 the French menace was reaching alarming proportions. French agents were carrying French influence into Borgu, north-east hinterland of the Niger River. British Government's reaction was vehement. The British Foreign Minister, Rosebery, demanded that Mizon, the French colonial agent, should be withdrawn.²⁹ In November, 1893, Rosebery called in the Germans in order to stop further French intrusion. The British had never very seriously feared the Germans. Their relations had had a personal factor involved. Herbert Bismarck, the German ambassador in England, was very much liked. The Anglo-German alliance led to the treaty of 1893. By this treaty the German Cameroons was to extend northward up to Lake Chad and to include the western borders of the former Egyptian Sudan.³⁰ This carefully planned alliance was designed to prevent the French from reaching the British spheres of the Niger and the Upper Nile. If the French threat was not eliminated, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the British Government to achieve its political objective of direct control of the colonies. While the government was indirectly defending the territorial

²⁹ Rosebery to Queen Victoria, June 30, 1893, Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd Series, II, 268-269.

³⁰ Hertslet, III, 914.

claims of the Royal Niger Company, it was, in fact, maintaining the security of the British future area of political authority.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ERA OF COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION, 1895-1900

A new era opened in British colonial policy in West Africa when Joseph Chamberlain, in Salisbury's Conservative Government, became the Colonial Secretary in 1895. He was the first statesman to value the West African colonies highly enough to risk war with France in order to preserve them. The old informal system of control was totally repugnant to him. He would encourage neither further retreat nor conciliation in West Africa. As he admitted, he introduced a "new policy" in colonial administration. Chamberlain's "cardinal" and "essential" imperial belief was supremacy, predominancy, and paramountcy.¹ In introducing his new imperial program, Chamberlain would not brook any opposition from recalcitrant native chiefs whom he considered as obscurantists. Those who resisted his "forward" policy in the hinterland were deposed. Such "crooked expedient" led to serious native revolts. As McPhee aptly remarked, West Africa was not an empty land like Australia or North America, where one was free to push into the frontier with all impunity. British pride in being supreme and lord of lords led to forcible and fraudulent displacement of native rulers who resisted British hinterland penetration.

Chamberlain's new policy of "Constructive Imperialism"² was a monumental contribution to British colonial policy in West Africa. He spoke of

¹Sir Charles A. Petrie, The Chamberlain Tradition. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1938, 115.

²McPhee, 19.

developing the colonies for posterity. In his speech in the House of Commons he said:

I regard many of our Colonies as being in the condition of underdeveloped estates and estates which can never be developed without Imperial assistance....Cases have already come to my knowledge of Colonies which had been British Colonies perhaps for more than a hundred years in which up to the present time British rule has done absolutely nothing,...I shall be prepared to consider very carefully, myself, and then, if I am satisfied, to confidently submit to the House any case which may occur in which by the judicious investment of British money those estates which belong to the British Crown may be developed for the benefit of their own population and for the benefit of the greater population which is outside.³

By 1895, West African trade and revenue were improving, generally.⁴ The increase of trade, as Chamberlain perhaps conceived it, demanded "scientific" administration. Chamberlain realized that the forces making for a widening of imperial boundaries resided in the frontier. Traders and frontiersmen were therefore to carry British influence inland. But as things were, no proper roads existed anywhere in West Africa. The only hope of progress lay in extending Government function. "It is our business," Chamberlain stated, "to extend its functions and to see in what way its operations can be usefully enlarged."⁵ For Chamberlain, progress and prosperity in Britain depended on developing the empire. Replying to the West African Railways Deputation he said that the policy of the Government would be to develop the resources of such colonies to the fullest extent; and "it is only in such a policy of development that I can see any solution of those great social

³Hansard Parliamentary Debate, Aug. 22, 1895, XXXVI, cols. 641-2. See Garvin, III, 19.

⁴McPhee, "Appendix A."

⁵Boyd, I, 164.

problems by which we are surrounded."⁶ In other words, capitalistic imperialism was the alternative to the corrosive force of Socialism at home. To assure the success of this program the Government was to call a halt to the laissez faire policy of allowing private companies to do the work of Government. In his cabinet memorandum on November 26, 1895, Chamberlain wrote,

...We have entrusted entirely to individual enterprise and capital ...yet it is certain that in many cases progress has been delayed, and in some cases absolutely stayed, because the only methods by which improvement could be carried out were beyond the scope of private resources.⁷

He argued therefore that the state should take the lead in empire-building. The developed estates, he contended, would open up "new fields for private enterprise and new markets for industry." "Government and Government alone can make the roads and the railways."⁸

The constructive imperialism of Chamberlain was both a radical and progressive policy. Exclusive reliance on local revenues, on diplomacy and mere spheres of influence, Chamberlain considered ineffectual for the attainment of the desired goal. The Imperial Treasury, he said, should provide loans for the construction of roads, railways, and harbors, the lack of which had repelled the merchant and private investor.⁹ The British sphere of influence, he stated should be brought under effective rule and British agents

⁶Garvin, III, 20; The Times, Aug. 24, 1895, "West African Railway's Deputation to the Colonial Office."

⁷Ibid., 176.

⁸Ibid., 177.

⁹Ibid.

were to impose peace and make the Africans contribute their labor and taxes. Only by such "scientific" administration, would there be wealth and progress for the British urban and agricultural poor. He now fused two items together--development and welfare. As these became the cardinal issue in his grammar of policies, he was determined to curb the liquor traffic and the slave trade--two evils that crippled trade. If these were not stopped, he reasoned, "we should kill the goose that lays the golden eggs--the people we want to be our best customers."¹⁰ His "new policy" was indeed a comprehensive program. Not only the Government but private enterprise, too, was to contribute to the development of the colonies. In this regard he earnestly appealed to the British people "to invest some of their superfluous wealth in the development of their great estate"; otherwise, he argued, "it would have been better never to have gone there."¹¹ Towards the end of 1895, therefore, Chamberlain authorized the West African administrators to begin the construction of railways in the hinterland. British merchants had been demanding such construction for decades.¹² Chamberlain's program included possible land reforms, collection of taxes from natives to recoup expenses, pacification of the interior to encourage uninterrupted trade, official supervision of local chiefs, construction of roads and railways to attract native products before the French and Germans could divert inland trade to their own ports. Calculating on "the opinion of the country which was gradually ripening," Chamberlain was almost certain to "meet with a satisfactory response."

¹⁰Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 4th Series, August 22, 1895, XXXVI, col. 642.

¹¹Garvin, III, 20.

¹²British Sessional Papers, 1905, LVI, 361-410.

Transportation development invariably encouraged British trade. It reduced costs of haulage and provided easier means of communication. Facility of communication eventually led to the development of big business and monopolistic combines which proved injurious to native traders. The impulse towards large scale enterprise led to the formation of the West African Shipping Ring in 1895. Not only was this Ring a gigantic monopolistic combine, it brought in its train the system of Deferred Rebates.¹³ Such deferred rebates were granted to big companies and to the Government. The "petty" native trader was crushed, literally. Buttressed in its monopoly, the Shipping Ring fixed prices with scant respect for native traders. The trade previously controlled by natives was now in new hands--British companies. The system adopted by the various companies virtually squeezed out the native traders from the competitive scene. Their complaints were incessant and vocal. But the Imperial Government did practically nothing until 1906 when it finally appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the dealings of the Shipping Ring. The companies gained predominant access to the natural resources of the estates--mining operations, markets, and developmental contracts, thus giving them a discriminatory advantage. The British Government, for instance, was the chief consumer of coal and cement from West Africa. These were bought more cheaply through the system of Deferred Rebates than could have been done otherwise. It is therefore easy to see why the Government did not act until late. This ever-increasing "economic

¹³McPhee, 95. "A deferred rebate is a discount on the invoice price returned after a lapse of time to a trader, on certain conditions, as a means of maintaining and keeping out would-be competitors from the trade." See Encyclopaedia Britanica. London: William Benton, 1964, 19:10.

capitalism" accentuated the question of political domination of the country where capital was invested. As Dutt put it, "the export of capital [played] a special important role in the violent expansion of the colonial system in the late nineteenth century and modern imperialist era."¹⁴

Chamberlain's program for the development of the colonies was launched in 1895. The gold resources of Ashanti in the Gold Coast were to be exploited. The chief of Ashanti naturally resisted British entry. But Chamberlain, as the Colonial Secretary, would brook no opposition. He was determined to defy the hostility and opposition of the King of Kumasi who also assumed to be the chief of Ashanti. As peaceful penetration seemed out of the question, Chamberlain was ready to employ military force to subdue the king and to bring his domain under British rule. On November 11, 1895, Chamberlain informed the War Office of the intended expedition to Kumasi.¹⁵ The Governor of the Gold Coast, Maxwell, was asked to recruit native and Hausa constabulary for the expedition.¹⁶ Chamberlain informed Maxwell that nothing but complete surrender of the King was to be demanded. When the King learned of the impending conquest, his delegates went to London to plead for peace. Chamberlain refused their plea. In a letter dated November 19, 1895, to Thomas Sutherst who had pleaded that Chamberlain accede to the request of the King's delegates, Chamberlain said:

I cannot, when many valuable lives are at stake, stand upon formalities and refuse to listen to their intermediary or to

¹⁴Dutt, 53. Dutt's analysis of the forms and techniques of colonial exploitation are instructive. 53-61.

¹⁵British Sessional Papers, 1896, LVIII, 835.

¹⁶Ibid., 847-849. Chamberlain to Maxwell, November 22, 1895.

examine into the reality of the submission which they offered on behalf of their king....The expedition will proceed;... the king will be required to pay the costs which have been, or may be incurred in connection with the expedition.¹⁷

The expedition proceeded as Chamberlain ordered. After an orgy of bloodshed and destruction the King surrendered and so Chamberlain had his way. The money used for the expedition was advanced to the Gold Coast from the Colonial Office.¹⁸

In Sierra Leone as well, Chamberlain's "interior policy" was applied. He authorized the Governor, Cardew, to bring the protectorate under closer administration. Chamberlain's "constructive imperialism" met with strong rebellion and resistance. Attempts to introduce direct taxation and land redistribution were frustrated by mass revolt. The former Governor, Sir Brandford Griffith, had notified the Colonial Office that "direct taxation was impossible in this Colony."¹⁹ Any imposition of taxation as advised by Chamberlain for the administration of the colony was vehemently opposed by the natives. Salmon, in his article on "Our West African Settlements" (1885) pointed out why Sierra Leone always resented British "onerous" taxes. He wrote:

Large tracts of coast have been annexed ...on the whole against the will of the people ...consequently, [they] resent our presence in their midst,...the British authorities are looked on by the natives ...as selfish grabbers of taxes, which are all expended within the confines of the Settlements.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., 848.

¹⁸ British Sessional Papers, 1904, LVI, 379.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1893-4, LIX, 344.

²⁰ Salmon, 373. The Settlements were the original British possessions on the coast.

As for the land reforms, they were withdrawn as being too explosive. Native resistance was so strong that only military coercion could bring the natives to submission. Merchants had often requested the development of the colonies so as to afford them better profits. But as Chamberlain's program proceeded, they chafed at his "high-class" bureaucracy which battered on their profits by way of customs duties. As most of his "scientific" administration incited native revolt and resistance, Chamberlain exclaimed: "Festina lente is a just motto in the development of colonies in the possession of barbarous tribes."²¹

During his first two years in the Colonial Office, Chamberlain accepted Prime Minister Salisbury's leadership without too much protest. But from 1897 to 1898, Chamberlain grew somewhat out of hand. Since 1889 the security of Egypt had been a dominant problem in Salisbury's African policy. Concessions had been made to both the French and the Germans on the west coast of Africa in order to divert their attention from the Nile. But the more Britain worsted France in Egypt, the more France raised her claims on the west coast of Africa. Salisbury was always cautious not to do anything that would result in a war between Britain and France. In a letter to the Queen on June 14, 1896, he wrote, that the difficulties in Egypt had "enabled our enemies to exact what terms they pleased."²² France had since 1895 been advancing towards the Royal Niger Company's sphere of influence. Ilo and Bussa (Boussa) were occupied; in Gandu and Sokoto British influence was challenged as the French negotiated treaties with the chiefs. In the Niger bend the French pressed forward, seizing Nikki and Gomba, where British agents had

²¹Robinson, 401.

²²Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd Series, III, 51.

already made treaties with the natives. Under these irritating intrusions by the French, Salisbury's use of diplomacy was no more welcome to Chamberlain. Chamberlain's "sense of crisis--of now or never--henceforward inflamed his already vehement temper toward desperate action."²³ As France had proved obnoxious and irreconcilable, Chamberlain fumed, she must yield to strength. "Peace at any price," Chamberlain said, "is to be an unworthy and ignoble doctrine for any great nation to hold." He was determined to resist French approaches to the Lower Niger "even at the cost of war."²⁴ Chamberlain's belligerence was now open. The crux of his reasoning was that "effective occupation" conferred superior rights, or, as the French diplomat Mr. Hanotaux put it, "possession is title." As Bussa was a position of both marked commercial and strategic importance, Chamberlain was prepared never to yield to the French "fanwise" movement of absorbing British spheres. To match French military strength Chamberlain created a new military corps known as the West African Frontier Force ("Waffs"). The handy "Waffs" would enable his Government, he contended, to meet occupation with occupation instead of relying on paper guarantees from the native kings and chiefs. The "Waffs" were a corps of native militia made up of Hausas and Yorubas, about 2000 strong. The new regiment was placed under Colonel Frederick Lugard, who was later to be the Governor General of Nigeria (1914). In a letter to Lord Selborne, September 29, 1897, Chamberlain wrote:

We ought--even at the cost of war--to keep the hinterland for the Gold Coast, Lagos and the Niger territories. We

²³Robinson, 404.

²⁴Garvin, III, 208; Chamberlain to Lord Selborne, Sept. 28, 1897. Selborne was the Under-Secretary and Chamberlain's right hand man in the Colonial Office.

ought not to allow the Gambia and Sierra Leone business to be repeated.²⁵

On December 1, 1897, Chamberlain submitted a stiff protest to Lord Salisbury regarding his compromising policy with the French. The letter stated, in part:

I regret that I am unable to agree with the proposal in the Foreign Office Memorandum that we should concede to France a position on the West bank of the Niger in the neighborhood of Jebba, and a right of way across our territory from there to the northern territory of Dahomey. I believe that a grant to another European nation of an enclave in British territory is unprecedented and would lead to the most serious complications in the future....I do not think that we ought to yield a jot to threats....²⁶

On the same day (December 1, 1897) Chamberlain wrote to Lord Selborne protesting against Salisbury's conciliatory attitude toward the French. The letter stated:

Lord Salisbury's memorandum and his telegram to Monson²⁷ are most discouraging. I thought he was entirely with us and now he is prepared to give away everything and get nothing. I am more than sorry to differ from him, but I cannot stand it.²⁸

In every way Chamberlain was tough and determined. "If there is war," a noted British writer on politics and defence, Mr. Spencer Wilkinson, wrote to Chamberlain on March 2, 1898, "you will have to run it."²⁹ It was just

²⁵Garvin, III, 211.

²⁶Ibid., 212-3.

²⁷Edmund Monson was the British Ambassador in Paris and Salisbury had contacted him about allowing the French some access in the Gold Coast hinterland.

²⁸Garvin, III, 213.

²⁹Ibid., 215.

to run the war that Chamberlain desired the aid of Goldie, the Royal Niger Company's head. Goldie refused to co-operate unless the future of his Chartered Company was guaranteed. But Chamberlain would stand no nonsense from Goldie in spite of his redoubtable and inestimable services to the Crown. Hence, Chamberlain wrote to Lord Selborne (September 19, 1897):

Now Goldie seems refractory and practically refuses to move.... I should like to tell him that the British Government does not understand the contract with the Company as he does, nor do they agree that he is to take all the profits and that we are to spend hundreds of thousands or possibly millions in securing his claims against the French and that he is then to step in and enjoy without cost all the security that we have secured for him.³⁰

Chamberlain's jingoism disturbed Lord Salisbury. In a letter to the Queen on November 14, 1897, he said, "Mr. Chamberlain is a little too warlike, and hardly sees the other side of the question."³¹ But as the majority of the Cabinet supported Chamberlain's positive action against the French on the west coast of Africa, Salisbury acquiesced "for fear of breaking up the Cabinet."³² For the sake of keeping Chamberlain in the Cabinet, Salisbury compromised and was therefore "yoked to Chamberlain" on the Niger question. Nevertheless, Salisbury did advise that diplomacy and negotiation should take precedence over overt military action. By 1898 the Anglo-French rivalry in West Africa became critical. Two disquieting telegrams from the Governor of Lagos (Nigeria) and the Governor of the Gold Coast were read by Chamberlain to the House of Commons (February 8, 1898). The telegrams carried information

³⁰Ibid., 209.

³¹Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd Series, III, 209. "Extracts from the Queen's Journal."

³²Ibid., 147.

about French activities in Bona (Gold Coast) and Ilo (Northwest bend of the Niger). Further French encroachments were reported in the Gold Coast hinterland and the "Empire of Sokoto" (under the Royal Niger Company), which had been secured to Britain by the Anglo-French treaty of 1890. Chamberlain was prepared to offer a counter-offensive against French invasion in the Gold Coast hinterland and the Niger bend "even at the cost of war." The House of Commons was fully in support of Chamberlain's West African Frontier Force ready to be used against French aggression.³³ Lugard and his second in command, Colonel James Willcocks, were authorized to proceed from the Niger westwards to Borgu and to occupy towns and villages and so bring such territories under British authority. As it was, an open imperial factor had been introduced for the expansion of British territorial claims--the use of armed force--instead of the traditional system of advance by trade. In the Lagos hinterland--Nikki, as well as the Gold Coast hinterland--Wa and Wagadugu--the British flag was hoisted and British officers left in charge of these acquisitions. Some times British and French troops confronted each other in the same village, each hoisting its Government's flag. The contest was feverish and exacerbating. The whole episode was one of "suspended war" which prevailed for nine months.

Lord Salisbury, under the cloud of impending war, was prepared to negotiate with the French particularly with regard to the Ilo question. The French Foreign Minister, M. Hanotaux had categorically stated that it was

³³Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, Feb. 24, 1898, 4th Series, LIII, 1617-1628.

impossible for him to give up Ilo.³⁴ But Chamberlain conceived of Salisbury's attitude as "a counsel of weakness" and would not yield to the French. The exchange of notes between the Prime Minister and the Colonial Secretary clearly illustrated the differences in the two characters. On June 2, 1898, Salisbury wrote to Chamberlain:

I think we have come to a critical point in the West African negotiations and must consider our further course carefully.... I say nothing about the quarrel with the French--for that is familiar ground. I therefore should confidently counsel the abandonment of Ilo....³⁵

Chamberlain replied to the letter on the same day (June 2, 1898) stating:

I have very anxiously considered your letter, as I feel that a wrong decision may lead to momentous consequences....I cannot agree with you that the cession of Ilo would not be a climb down....Although, therefore, I am most anxious to meet your wishes, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that I have gone to the extreme limit to which, as specially charged with these interests, I am entitled to go, and that on the side of the Niger at any rate, I could not defend any further surrender.

As to Bona [in the Gold Coast hinterland]--....I am ready to give way.³⁶

By this time the Anglo-French Commission appointed in 1896 to examine the boundary limits of both Powers was sitting at Paris. Chamberlain intimated to the Prime Minister that England would not be the loser even if the negotiations broke down. Also he urged that a forward policy of interference in the French sphere of influence be adopted. In the latter part

³⁴G. P. Gooch, British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, I, 155. Monson to Lord Salisbury, June 3, 1898.

³⁵Garvin, III, 218.

³⁶Ibid., 219.

of the above letter he continued:

I think that we shall not be the greatest losers even if the present negotiations fall through. In that case I hope we may take steps to put ourselves in a better position before they are resumed. There is no reason why we should not follow the example of the French and occupy places in their hinterland which would give us something to exchange when they are tired of the danger and expense of the present situation.³⁷

Lord Salisbury could not help but be yoked to Chamberlain. He could hardly perceive the value of Ilo but he gave his Colonial Secretary the go-ahead sanction in clinching his demand for Ilo. On June 3, 1898, he wrote to Chamberlain:

I am wholly unconvinced of the value of Ilo; and I cannot discover on what our claim to it rests. But I should prefer giving up Bona to giving up Ilo because our title to Bona seems to me positively bad. It will be a pity if we break off the negotiations, for it will add to our difficulties in the Nile Valley.³⁸

Chamberlain in his letter had suggested that "a small European force, with perhaps Indian auxiliaries and modern ornaments" be sent to the troubled areas in order "to establish our authority." To this Salisbury replied:

If we are to send British or Indian troops in the hope of fighting another Plassey with Lugard as our Clive and Sokoto as our Bengal, the prospect becomes very much more serious ...There is no loot to get except in Goldie's dreams. If you wish to come to terms it would be prudent to do so before we take Khartum [in Sudan]. We shall get nothing out of the French Assembly after the event.³⁹

Content with carrying his stipulations on the Niger, Chamberlain wrote to Salisbury (June 3, 1898):

³⁷ Ibid., 220.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

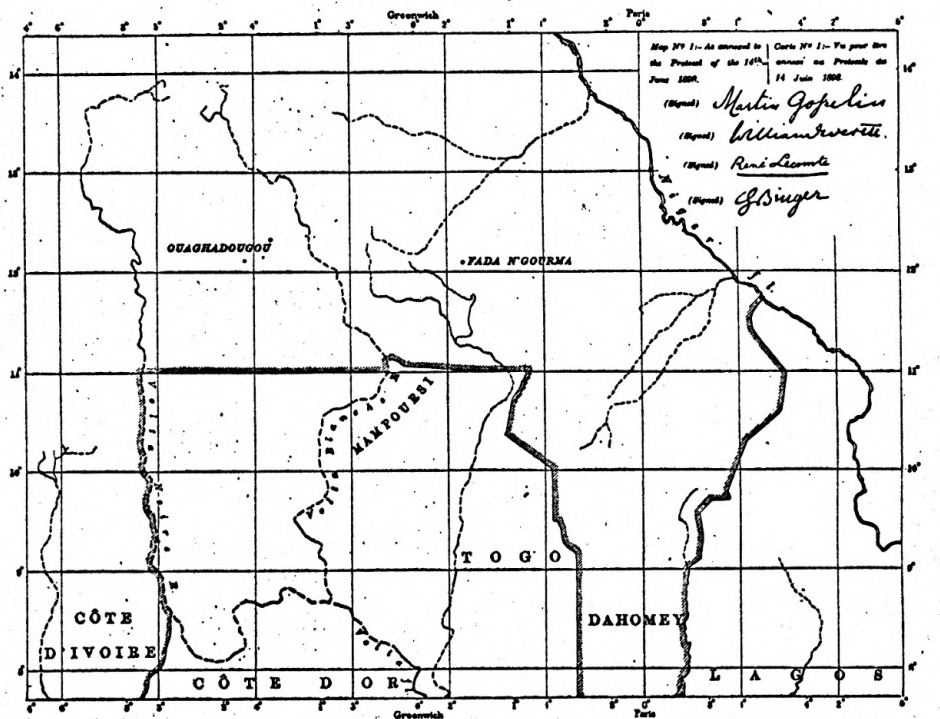
In this difficult business I desire to meet you by giving up everything that does not appear to me essential to our honor and our interests. Ilo is in my opinion one of the exceptions--Bona is not. If I were alone concerned I would not give up either....⁴⁰

After the differences between Salisbury and Chamberlain had been resolved, Salisbury explained to Paris that Ilo could not be surrendered. The Anglo-French negotiation proceeded until June 14, 1898, when the Convention was signed. The treaty of "mutual goodwill" involved the delimitation of the British Colonies of the Gold Coast, Lagos, and the other British possessions to the west of the Niger, and of the French possessions of the Ivory Coast, Sudan, and Dahomey, as well as for the delimitation of the British and French possessions and the spheres of influence of the two countries to the east of the Niger. The treaty was signed by Sir Edmund Monson, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Government of Great Britain, and his Excellency, Mr. Gabriel Hanotaux, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the French Republic. The provisions of the treaty were significantly set down in articles I, II, and III.⁴¹ On the whole Britain gained the bulk of the territories which had been disputed for two years (1896-1898). All the interests of the Colonial Secretary had been gained. The French, according to the evacuation terms of the treaty, evacuated their former positions along the Niger from Ilo to Bussa, thus leaving the British Government the master on both banks of the River Niger from Ilo to the sea.

⁴⁰Ibid., 221.

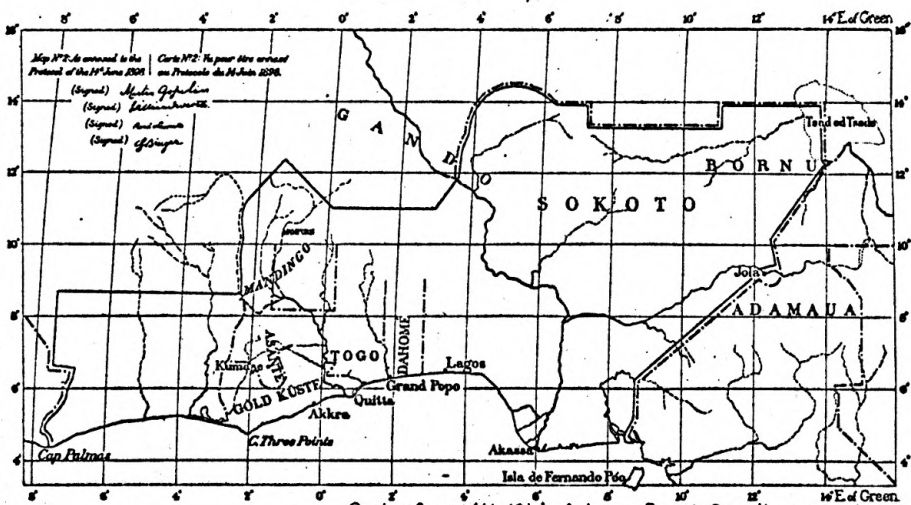
⁴¹Hertslet, II, 786-787; British and Foreign State Papers, 1898-1899, LXXXI, 40-49. For further correspondence respecting delimitation and evacuation agreements, see 109-111.

ANGLO-FRENCH BOUNDARY, WEST OF THE NIGER.
CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE
OF JUNE 14, 1898.



Scale of map (Nº 9) in Atlas or Pouch 37.8 miles to 1014 inches
Ordnance Survey, Southampton.

ANGLO-FRENCH BOUNDARY, EAST OF THE NIGER.
CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE
OF JUNE 14, 1898.



Commercial & Fiscal Boundary ——— Scale of map (Nº 10) in Atlas or Pouch 64 miles to 1014 inches
All other Boundaries shown in colours on 1898 (b) are represented here by ———
Ordnance Survey, Southampton.

Consequently, the organization of Nigeria was "an achievement second to nothing in Chamberlain's career ...in the field of Colonial policy."⁴²

⁴²Garvin, III, 223.

CHAPTER FIVE

BRITISH POLICY IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA

Nigeria was the largest, and in many ways, the most promising of the West African Settlements.¹ It was, however, the last of the Settlements to be acquired by the British in 1861. Like all the other British former colonies, the genesis of British interest in Nigeria dates back to the sixteenth century. An English merchant, John Hawkins was said to have visited Benin (West Nigeria) in 1553 and exchanged articles of trade with the natives. When trade on palm oil, pepper, ivory and other native products took the place of the odious traffic in human beings (slaves), Britain emerged as the largest European dealer. But as the slave trade eventually declined in the nineteenth century, three other factors operated to herald a new era in British policy in Nigeria. The first was the phenomenal Economic Revolution in the demand for palm oil and palm kernel; second, the movement toward the interior for trade, which was not unmixed with political motives; third, international rivalry which "completely revolutionized the situation on the Coast, a region which had long been a virtual preserve of British interests."²

By 1885, when the period under survey began, Nigeria did not exist literally as a unified country. The various tribes that made up the entire country were each in conflict with the other. Events and circumstances led eventually to the amalgamation of the various sections in 1914 under the

¹Evans, 125.

²Ibid., 136.

Governorship of Frederick (now Lord) Lugard. To really understand British colonial policy in Nigeria (1885-1900), it is essential to examine the colonial program in the country. Prior to 1900, British "divide and rule" policy was introduced into the country. In Southern Nigeria, consular administration was established; Lagos (now the capital) was placed under the Colonial Office--the administration being superintended by the Governor; and Northern Nigeria was administered by the Royal Niger Company.³ Repeated attempts had been made by the various administrative bodies to extend British authority in the hinterland. Such attempts were foiled because of the hostility of native chiefs. The policy from 1885-1900, therefore, was to remove those chiefs whose presence made British extension of political control of the regions impossible. As those chiefs were removed, British officials were appointed to replace them as administrative agents.

The Berlin Conference (1884-1885) was not called to settle specifically Nigerian issues, but the decisions affected her in several respects. When Britain accepted the invitation to attend the Conference, she made it abundantly clear that the rights and privileges acquired by Goldie on the Niger were to be respected.⁴ The principles laid down in the Berlin Act (Art. 34), intended to control the acquisition of African territory, became of fundamental importance in delimiting the frontiers of Nigeria. The Act had provided for "effective occupation" and notification of such occupation of which a mere paper claim could not be accepted as valid. A few months after the Berlin Conference, the British Government proclaimed the Oil Rivers

³Harris, 135.

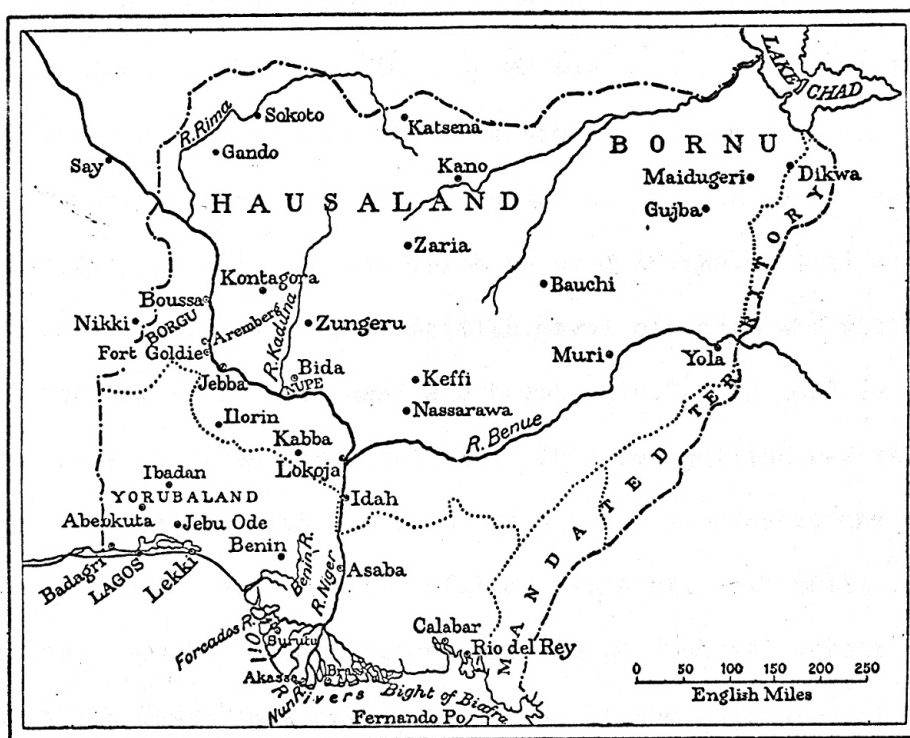
⁴British Sessional Papers, 1885, LV, 2.

and Niger Districts as British Protectorates (June 5, 1885). In the same year, Harry Johnston, later Vice-Consul of the Oil Rivers Districts, was sent out to explore and administer the Oil Rivers. His report was impressive but his ruthless actions made a disgraceful record of British colonial administration. The administration of the Oil Rivers was a classic example of how British colonial agents deposed local chiefs who resisted British penetration inland and thus extended British authority over resistant elements.

As has been pointed out earlier, coastal chiefs had proved to be very valuable agents for British commercial and administrative interests. Many of the local coastal chiefs had established themselves as independent and wealthy middlemen. Their prestige, wealth and authority depended on their capacity to maintain their position as intermediaries between native producers and British (or European) merchants. With the increase in the volume of trade, coupled with a desire for "super-profits," there arose a suggestion that native middlemen be eliminated. The Consul General, Hewett, who was in charge of the Protectorate, was so preoccupied with his effort to thwart French and German activities that he gave very little attention to this pressing problem. It is true, however, that a choice had to be made between two policies: either to crush native rulers and establish direct government intercourse with the natives or to use the rulers as the practice had been.

When Johnston arrived in Nigeria in 1885, it was the first alternative of bringing the recalcitrant native chiefs to reason that really appealed to him. As Arthur Cook described him, "he was a man of strong personality, quick to make decisions, and persistent in carrying them into effect."⁵

⁵Cook, 60.



Sketch Map of Nigeria.

No sooner did Johnston arrive in the Protectorate than he became involved in a dispute with a prominent chieftain--King Jaja of Opobo. "This affair," Cook accurately observed, "did much to determine British policy in the Niger Districts and is an excellent illustration of the processes of imperialism."⁶

King Jaja rose to a position of prominence in Opobo--one of the centers of palm oil trade on the Niger Delta. He was once a slave but later became a shrewd trader and quickly established himself as a middleman between the British and native merchants. His agents traveled widely in the interior buying palm oil and palm kernels which he sold to the coastal merchants. Many of the merchants as well as British naval officers who visited his town regarded him as "intelligent and hospitable."⁷ In 1873 Jaja was recognized as an independent chieftain. This recognition was the result of a treaty which he signed with Consul Charles Livingstone--brother of David Livingstone, the intrepid Central African explorer. His position was further fortified by a special treaty signed with Consul-General Hewett in 1884, at a time when the Consul was trying to forestall the intrusion of the French and Germans in the British sphere of influence on the Niger. When King Jaja demanded a definition of the term "protectorate" Hewett told him in a letter written January 8, 1884:

...The Queen does not want to take your country, or your markets, but at the same time she is anxious that no other nation should take them. She undertakes to extend her gracious power and protection, which will leave your country still under your Government; she has no wish to disturb your rule, although she is anxious to see your country get up, as well as the countries

⁶Ibid.

⁷Johnston, The Story of My Life, 176.

of other tribes with whom her people have been for so long trading.⁸

Jaja was therefore recognized as a sovereign ruler of his people. When in 1882, a British trader, George Watts, made an effort to trade with the people of the interior, thus by-passing Jaja, Jaja protested to the British government against what he considered an invasion of his monopoly. The Colonial Secretary, Lord Granville, made clear British policy regarding inland trade. In a letter to Jaja he stated:

I have now to inform you that Her Majesty's Government must decline to commit themselves to any recognition of your claims to this country, and I have at the same time to warn you that they cannot permit the taking of any steps which would lead to the destruction of the lives and property of any British subjects who might see fit to establish themselves as traders in that country.⁹

In practice, however, the policy was not followed by any immediate action. Merchants continued to press the Government to assert its authority.

By 1885 the policy of drifting without any definite action was halted. British traders continued to request Her Majesty's Government to protect their trade. They were angered by Jaja's trade monopoly and his refusal to reduce his prices of palm oil and palm kernel. In an attempt to force Jaja's hand the merchants formed the so-called Amalgamated Association against Jaja. The object of the Association was to fix the prices at which it would buy Jaja's products. But Jaja reacted by detaching one of the firms--Alexander Miller and Brothers, from the Association. The Association's efforts were

⁸Quoted in Cook, 61.

⁹British Sessional Papers, 1883, LXXIV, 13.

therefore a failure.¹⁰ Alexander Miller and Brothers agreed to pay Jaja his usual commission if he would grant them a monopoly of his business. The Association promptly complained to Johnston. When Johnston tried to bring Jaja to terms, he quickly produced the treaties he had signed with Consul Charles Livingstone and Consul-General Hewett. But Johnston was determined to force the issue.

In the meantime Johnston had made an extensive tour of the interior and speculated that "the extension of trade caused by freedom of intercourse between the coast and the rich interior would be enormous" if only the truculent King of Opobo River were removed. As he put it, "Jaja represented the whole crisis of our Protectorate over Southern Nigeria: our attempt to establish freedom of trade."¹¹ Johnston was determined to make a breakthrough into Jaja's domain. After his tour he reported:

...Here is the country where white men may hope to settle and enjoy good health, and it is from lands like these that runaway slaves and upstart Kings like Jaja are trying to keep us from penetrating, lest their ill-gotten gains as middlemen be diminished.¹²

The idea that Jaja monopolized the entire palm oil trade in his domain was quite repugnant to Johnston. He was determined to whittle down Jaja's obstructiveness. Speaking of Jaja, he remarked:

He wished to constitute palm oil and palm kernels throughout all his domain his own monopoly. He would farm the palm forests of the interior, be the sole seller of their oil products, and compensate the natives who brought in the oil or the kernels. He in fact would do all the trade; and as

¹⁰British Sessional Papers, 1888, LXXIV, 31-32; Johnston, The Story of My Life, 176-177.

¹¹Johnston, The Story of My Life, 178.

¹²British Sessional Papers, 1888, LXXIV, 53.

he had fixed a price at which the European merchants could buy these things from him, he resented the fluctuations in value of palm oil in the European market....He was seeking to become the overlord of the vigorous Ibo people behind his swamps.¹³

The King Jaja-Johnston conflict dragged on for some years. Johnston on several occasions had attempted to discuss the issue with the King with the view of persuading him to lift his "iron curtain" which obstructed British penetration into the hinterland. But Jaja declined, stating as Johnston put it that, "my 'father,' Consul Hewett, had gone home and that he could only resume the discussion when he returned."¹⁴ Early in August, 1887, Johnston made an effort to compel the King to break his alliance with Alexander Miller and Brothers. Johnston had persuaded Jaja to sign a treaty binding himself, under penalty of heavy fine, not to restrict the trade with the markets of the interior. This agreement under duress spelled ruin for Jaja. Hence he protested to Lord Salisbury in London. A delegation of subordinate chiefs and representatives of the Alexander Miller and Brothers company visited London seeking an interview with Lord Salisbury. Salisbury refused to grant the delegation a personal interview. The delegation learned from an under-secretary that the "matter 'is engaging his Lordship's serious attention'."¹⁵

From this time on Jaja's position was at stake. Johnston never faltered in his determination to depose King Jaja and thus create a vacuum of power in Opobo. He knew he could not depose the King without the sanction

¹³ Johnston, The Story of My Life, 177.

¹⁴ Ibid., 179.

¹⁵ Cook, 64.

of the Foreign Office. So Johnston visited Bonny from where he cabled the Foreign Office for authority to deal with his opponent. "To nip [Jaja's] scheme in two before he could assemble all his widely scattered forces and retire with them to the Ibo country,"¹⁶ Johnston requested permission either to persuade Jaja to accompany him to the Gold Coast Colony to be tried by the Court of the West African Colonies, or to declare him to be at war with the British Government, whereupon action would be taken against him. The cablegram demanded a "very quick response!"¹⁷ In the course of a few hours he received the reply: "Your action with regard to Jaja approved. Further instructions will be sent after communication with the Admiralty."¹⁸ Johnston was now given a free hand to deal with the King. Having obtained the authority he wanted, Johnston hastened back to Opobo and summoned the King to a conference. The King was given a choice of attending or being deposed as an enemy of the Queen. Johnston assured the King of a safe conduct--that "if he refused my conditions he should be allowed to return to his town before any action of hostility took place."¹⁹ Jaja had little or no choice at this time but to comply. He was accompanied by many of his warriors, but he later found that he was trapped as Johnston's promise of safe conduct was false.

When Jaja arrived for the conference, he was informed that he was to

¹⁶ Johnston, The Story of My Life, 180.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ British Sessional Papers, 1888, LXXIV, 54. See Johnston, The Story of My Life, 181.

¹⁹ Ibid.

be removed to Accra, the capital of Gold Coast, to be tried by a Government appointed judge. "To every one's surprise," Johnston said, "he assented and went quickly on board H.M.S. Goshawk."²⁰ In fact, the King's compliance was a sullen obedience under duress and not a resigned undertaking. "Surrounded by unfriendly tribes and menaced by the guns of the Goshawk he had no choice but to yield."²¹ The King accompanied Johnston to Accra to be tried by Sir Walter Hunt-Grubbe. The trial was a farce in that it was a total violation of the trial provisions of the Order in Council of March 26, 1885. The Order in Council had provided, among other things, the attendance of the necessary witnesses for both the prosecution and the defense, the person convicted was to be ordered to be of good behavior and only in default of such security would he be deported.²² Contrary to these provisions, the King was given little time to prepare his case; witnesses were not summoned, and much of the evidence preferred against him was false. As a result Jaja was found guilty and exiled to the West Indies for five years. Johnston was even content that "Grubbe gave Jaja a fair trial."²³ In 1889, when Jaja's health in his West Indian exile became critical, Salisbury regretfully commented: "Jaja's death would be an extreme embarrassment. It would induce a close inquiry into the circumstances of his deportation, which cannot be defended according to European notions of good faith."²⁴ Consequently, he was pardoned by Lord

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Cook, 65.

²²British Foreign and State Papers, 1884-5, LXXVI, 966-967.

²³Johnston, The Story of My Life, 182.

²⁴Roland Oliver, 133.

Salisbury and asked to return, but he died before he could reach West Africa.

The deposition of Jaja marked an important step in the establishment of British authority in Southern Nigeria. For one thing it "ended," as Johnston put it, "the tyranny of middle-men"²⁵ and opened the way for British penetration into the interior. "The quick result of my intervention," the prancing proconsul prided himself, "was an enormous increase in Opobo trade, on the part of the natives as well as of the European areas."²⁶ "Five British firms," Johnston continued, "are now building and trading in the Ibo markets of the interior ...and the people received them with the most fervid welcome."²⁷ Johnston had hoped to be appointed the Consul-General or Governor of the Oil Rivers districts. To his disillusionment, he was appointed in 1888 as High Commissioner in Nyasaland. His ambition in West Africa was never realized but his work seemingly was appreciated by the British Government. From 1890 to 1901 he was Commissioner in several of the East African countries. "Lord Salisbury," Lady Gwendolen remarked, "was responsible for these appointments and had a great confidence in Sir Harry's intuitive capacity for the management of natives."²⁸

Instead of Johnston, Sir Claude MacDonald was chosen as the Consul-General of the Oil Rivers. (He was later the first Governor of the Niger Coast Protectorate.) He made a comprehensive study of the Oil Rivers in 1889. He visited many of the districts; conferred with many of the chiefs;

²⁵ Johnston, The Story of My Life, 182.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ British Sessional Papers, 1888, LXXIV, 100.

²⁸ Lady Gwendolen, IV, 242.

negotiated treaties with native rulers and had them pledge themselves under British protection. In making his report to the Colonial Office he advised that the Oil Rivers Districts be separated from the area administered by the Royal Niger Company. Liverpool merchants even pressured him to remain firm to this decision because of the monopolistic trade practices of the Royal Niger Company. The reasons given by MacDonald for the creation of a separate administrative unit were three-fold: First, it would prevent the establishment of a trade monopoly and make the natives better disposed towards British rule. He argued:

They will all welcome the direct government by Her Majesty's officers, because they believe that such rule is absolutely impartial in trade matters; but if, in spite of their protests, they are handed over to the government of traders, they will, so they assure me at Benin, Brass, New Calabar, Bonny, and Old Calabar, resist such change by force of arms and with all the strength at their disposal.²⁹

Second, MacDonald held that relations with foreign powers would be conducted more efficiently than if the administration were left with a private company. Third, he argued it would be easier to establish direct government than to attempt to rule by chartered companies. On January 1, 1891, the Oil Rivers was created as a separate administrative unit. MacDonald was given the title of both Commissioner and Consul-General, and a force of armed constabulary was raised. British rule thus became a reality.³⁰

The frontiers of the Oil Rivers Protectorate, as the area was then called, were defined. The coastline between the Nun and Forcados Rivers was left to the jurisdiction of the Royal Niger Company. The other areas were

²⁹Quoted in Cook, 68.

³⁰Ibid., 69.

left to the management of the Consul-General who was the head of the administration. The creation of the Oil Rivers Protectorate ended the period of drift. The Consul-General had in mind a very comprehensive plan for the administration of the Protectorate and for its effective occupation. In an address to the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce he declared:

The general plan, which is based on lines laid down by the Brussels Act, is to establish fortified posts at certain distances in the interior, to form between them lateral communications by means of roads well kept and guarded, and then advance another parallel, leaving nothing unfinished or unguarded behind, and by this means bringing the whole of the ground covered under the influence of civilization and Christianity.³¹

MacDonald's plan was both ambitious and expensive. He established Centers of Administration on the more important rivers and in some large towns. To meet costs of administration, he introduced import duties on alcohol, tobacco, guns and some other articles. The duties yielded a handsome amount during the first year--£87,695.³² The whole Protectorate was under the Foreign Office of which the Consul-General was the direct representative. Several districts were created--a fruitful policy of the British Government in West Africa--the "Divide and Rule" policy. Each district was under the direct authority of a Vice-Consul, who in turn was assisted by some other junior officers. The network of bureaucratic machinery was indeed impressive as well as expensive for the districts were to finance their administration. The Vice-Consul was in fact the backbone of the entire system.³³ It devolved on him to extend British rule in the district to which

³¹Cited in Ibid., 69.

³²British Sessional Papers, 1895, LXXI, 2-6.

³³Cook, 70.

he had been assigned, negotiate treaties with native rulers, look after the administration of the customs, postal, military, and treasury departments. Of all the departments under his authority, the political department was the most important. This was so because it dealt with the natives and concerned itself with the problem of making British rule an effective instrument in restoring peace and order in the district. The extension of British political administration meant, in essence, that, for a real effective administration to be attained, some kind of armed force was to be secured. It was realized by the officials that they would almost inevitably have to fight some of the native chiefs before they could be induced to accept British rule. In other words, it would be misleading to give the idea that the various districts gladly welcomed British imposition of authority. On the contrary, chiefs and tribesmen strongly resented British intrusion. As a learned Nigerian statesman put it, "...when people talk of Nigeria today, too often they sound as if the Nigerian people had voluntarily surrendered their rights and had invited the British to come in. Resistance, however, had continued from the very first."³⁴ A native army was raised under Captain (afterwards Sir Ralph) Moor. British administrators and merchants, after many years of privation, had finally established themselves in the interior.

To ensure a profitable trade and the stability of administration, order and peace had to be maintained. In the interior, however, inter-tribal wars, slavery, and human sacrifices were still rife. One cardinal policy of the British administrators was to stop slavery and bring order out of chaos and confusion. But the legal stopping of the slave traffic had its political

³⁴A. A. Nwafor Orizu, Without Bitterness. Creative Age Press, 1944, 135.

repercussions. The British waged incessant war against native chiefs who continued to indulge in slave trade. As those chiefs lost the economic benefits from the traffic, their political authority and power came to an end. And as the authority of the local chief declined, more conflicts--if not anarchy--were generated. It then devolved on the British administrator to fill the vacuum of power vacated by the local ruler. This process of assuming political power formed one of the never-expressed tactics of the British for taking over political control of most of the West African colonies. In some other cases, the practice was not as subtle as this. Overt forceful conquest was adopted and, in fact, "the practice of deposing kings, destroying Nigerian war instruments, and installing weak rulers, [who would be mere British stooges] characterized British policy in Nigeria."³⁵ In 1893, the Oil Rivers Protectorate was changed to the Niger Coast Protectorate as a prelude to the formation of Southern Nigeria.

In 1894, the MacDonald administration faced a serious crisis when it came into conflict with chief Nana of Jekri. Chief Nana, like King Jaja of Opobo, was an able native chief and the Viceroy of the King of Benin. Benin was one of the first towns of alluring fame that was visited by the Europeans as far back as the fifteenth century. During the nineteenth century when attempts were made to find the outlet of the Niger, Benin City was used as the starting point of the explorations. Chief Nana had been used as an instrument for furthering British interests in the interior. On July 16, 1884, Jekri was proclaimed a British protectorate. In 1885, Chief Nana was recognized as "Governor" by Consul Hewett. But Chief Nana was never popular

³⁵Ibid.

with the merchants and missionaries. The British merchants accused him of obstructing their trade with the hinterland; the missionaries represented him as a ruthless slave dealer. To both elements, therefore, Nana was nothing but a truculent personage who would not encourage British trade in the interior or give up the nefarious slave traffic and human sacrifices. Between 1887 and 1888, Sir Harry Johnston went to Benin to investigate the charges leveled against Chief Nana by the merchants. Upon investigation he "found him different to [sic] the traders' descriptions." Johnston observed that Nana's complaints against the British agents of imperialism were sound. He remarked:

he [Nana] was a fine-looking Negro,...I investigated his complaints and found them in most cases justified. The trading houses came to an agreement with him and it was understood that the interior markets under Nana's control were open to them.³⁶

The findings of Vice-Consul Johnston did not bring a solution to the problem with Chief Nana. The traders had insisted that he be removed as a middleman so that they could trade directly with the people of the interior. Matters came to a climax in 1894. The Acting Consul-General Moor (MacDonald was on leave) acted on the tales of traders and missionaries. Unwilling to use Nana as "a valuable adviser in Delta politics" as Johnston had hoped, Moor sent a dispatch to the Foreign Office indicating that trade was at a standstill in the Benin River, that his authority had been defied, and that Nana's continued presence was a threat to the peace and prosperity of the Protectorate.³⁷ Some of the stories told about Nana were probably true,

³⁶ Johnston, The Story of My Life, 197.

³⁷ British Sessional Papers, 1895, LXXI, 2.

particularly the practice of human sacrifices, but the steps taken against him were questionable and improper.

Chief Nana, in order to protect his trade and slave dealing had collected some war arms which would strengthen him sufficiently against British intrusion. In Evans' phrase, Nana's collection of arms was "the largest store of munitions of war ever possessed by any native chief."³⁸ Nana's capital city, Brohemie, was therefore fortified though it did not prove a serious obstacle to the British force. Both MacDonald and his successor, Moor, were prejudiced against Nana because of the allegations of traders and Nana's proclivity for indulging in human sacrifices. The British first used trade blockade as a peaceful coercion of Nana but it proved ineffective. The British Government was not anxious to use overt force without some plausible pretext. The pretext for a show-down with Nana came over the question of Nana's attack on a small town at the mouth of the River Niger. The British administrators felt that British prestige and authority must be maintained. Towards the end of August, British and Nana's forces met face to face, resulting in several casualties. The British brought more pressure to bear on chief Nana by attacking his capital town. Nana offered to make peace but the British administrators refused to accept anything but unconditional surrender. The town was besieged; the chief was captured after a futile attempt to escape and later exiled. Benin at last was brought into British hands. In the place of Nana's administration was substituted British rule. Within a few years "trade and prosperity followed

³⁸ Evans, 162.

the flag."³⁹ Nana was left a broken man and his viceroyalty taken from him.⁴⁰ The removal of Chief Nana yielded important results to the British. It established the policy of removing native rulers who opposed British penetration into the interior; it enhanced the prestige of the new administration and thus prepared the way for a decisive combat with the Oba of Benin, the most powerful chief within the Protectorate. Finally, Nana's removal dealt a death blow to the slave trade.

The overthrow of chief Nana was followed by the conquest of the Kingdom of Benin (an important slave center). The King, Oba Overami, was induced to give up the slave trade. The anti-slave trade campaign had been, of course, one of British pretexts for the inroads into the interior. The King had refused on several occasions to place himself and his kingdom under British protection. Not until 1892 did the vice-consul of the Benin River, Captain Galway, make a treaty with the King, which placed Benin under British protection. The treaty bound him to suppress the slave trade, and abolish human sacrifices. In spite of the treaty, however, the King still continued in his usual practices. In 1896, the Acting Consul-General Phillips, who had succeeded Moor decided to visit Oba Overami in the hope of persuading him to open up trade routes into the interior and to stop the practice of human sacrifice. Captain Alan Boisragon, the Commander of the military forces of the Protectorate, remarked, concerning the situation in the Benin City:

It was becoming a perfect disgrace that in the Protectorate, particularly in a part so close to one of our vice-consular districts, so terrible a state of affairs as that, in what

³⁹Evans, 163.

⁴⁰Johnston, The Story of My Life, 198.

was not very improperly called, the City of Blood, should continue.⁴¹

The King was not happy with the prospect of Phillips' visit and asked him to delay his planned journey because he was celebrating the anniversary of his father's death. The king did, however, promise to receive the Consul-General after some months. To Consul Phillip the Overami's offer was not acceptable; he was determined to go. Phillips accordingly notified the King that he was coming with a small unarmed escort. This decision was made in the face of repeated warnings that the venture was hazardous. In January, 1897, Phillips and his party left for Benin.

The results were disastrous. Phillips' party was attacked and he and most of his men, were killed. Only two officers escaped the great massacre to inform the Government of the sorry incident. The reaction was prompt and immediate. The British agents in the Foreign Office felt that British authority had been seriously challenged. A naval expeditionary force under the command of Rear Admiral Rawson was dispatched to Benin to punish the people. After several days of stiff resistance and orgies of slaughter, the British forces entered Benin City on February 18, 1896. The King tried to escape but was afterwards captured and exiled to Calabar, where he died in 1914. British vengeance was also visited on lesser chiefs who had been implicated in the attack of Phillips' party.⁴² The conquest of Benin had political, economic, and social results. A territory of approximately 3,000 square miles was now placed under British administration; direct trade and

⁴¹Captain Alan Boisragon, The Benin Massacre. London: Methuen & Co., 1897, 63. Captain Boisragon was also one of the two Englishmen who escaped the Benin Massacre; Cook, 73.

⁴²British Sessional Papers, 1897, 28-30.

commerce was opened up between the natives and British merchants, and the long-standing practice of slave traffic and human sacrifice came to an end. In April, 1899, the Foreign Office transferred the administration of the entire Niger Coast Protectorate to the Colonial Office, headed by Joseph Chamberlain. The anomaly of two separate jurisdictions in the Niger Coast Protectorate was done away with when, in the same year (1899) the charter of the Royal Niger Company was revoked and the part of the Niger Coast Protectorate under the Company was included in the newly-created Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (January 1, 1900). The titles of "Consul-General" and "Consul" were abolished and the office of High Commissioner was created with Commissioners under the High Commissioner. The political unit of Southern Nigeria was now an accomplished fact. British administration had replaced the hitherto native administration. Sir Walter Egerton was appointed High Commissioner of Southern Nigeria and the Governor of Lagos in 1904. In 1906 Lagos was included in Southern Nigeria.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MAKING OF NORTHERN NIGERIA

Northern Nigeria, unlike the South, was the creation of the Royal Niger Company and later of Sir Frederick Lugard, its first High Commissioner in 1900. The discovery of the River Niger was followed by myriads of trading concerns which competed with one another for trade on the Niger. The arrival of Goldie on the scene in 1877 altered the ever-increasing cut-throat competition and rivalry among the various trading firms. In 1879 he succeeded in uniting the firms into one organization known as the "United African Company" with a capital of £125,000.¹ Thereafter, the Company's success became rapid. Its capital increased considerably and a regular system of trading stations was established on the banks of the Niger. The agents of the Company started immediately to negotiate trade treaties with the natives, and to maintain peace and order in the hinterland for the success of their trade. In 1881, the capital of the company rose to £1,000,000 as a result of a subsidy from the British Government. In 1882, the firm was recognized by the Government as the "National African Company." Prior to 1886 (when the Company was granted a charter), the area of operation of the company was almost exclusively in the vast region south of Lokoja (at the confluence of the Niger and Benue).

On July 10, 1886, the company was granted a royal charter and was later to be known as the Royal Niger Company. The political and commercial powers of the company dated from 1886. The extent of its political and commercial

¹Lord Aberdare, former member of Gladstone's First Cabinet, was the first Governor.

authority has been discussed earlier. Its area of jurisdiction was defined to include territories along the Benue to Yola, the Lower Niger and Middle Niger, and one thousand miles into the interior as far as Borgu, Gando, and Sokoto.

By the General Act of the Berlin Conference, Southern Nigeria, that is, the Niger and Oil Rivers districts, was guaranteed as a British sphere of influence; Northern Nigeria was still open.² France, Germany and England challenged one another for the control of the vast area. Goldie, acting both for the interest of his company and that of the British Government, was determined to extend his control over the emirates of the north. The German threat which developed first was forestalled by the activities of Joseph Thomson, the shrewd and diplomatic agent of the Company. By March, 1885, Thomson set out on a treaty-making mission with the Sultan of Sokoto. On June 1, 1885, Thomson succeeded in negotiating treaties with the Sultan, which gave the Company "exclusive rights to the country on both sides of the River Benue." The treaty provisions eliminated the Germans as serious competitors for the control of Northern Nigeria. The terms of the treaty were as follows:

ARTICLE I - For the mutual advantage of our people, and those Europeans trading under the name of the "National African Company (Limited)," I, Umuoru, King of the Mussulmans of the Soudan, with the consent and advice of my Council, grant and transfer to the above people, or other with whom they may arrange, my entire rights to the country on both sides of the River Benue and rivers flowing into it throughout my dominions for such distance from its and their banks as they may desire.

²Cook, 84.

ARTICLE II - We further grant to the above-mentioned Company the sole right, among foreigners, to trade in our territories, and the sole right, also among foreigners, to possess or work places from which are extracted articles such as lead and antimony.

ARTICLE III - We further declare that no communication will be held with foreigners coming from the rivers except through the above-mentioned Company.

ARTICLE IV - These grants we made for ourselves, our heirs, and successors for ever, and declare them to be irrevocable.

ARTICLE V - The Europeans above named, the National African Company (Limited), agree to make Umuoru, Sultan of Sokoto, a yearly present of goods to the value of 3,000 bags of cowries, in return for the above grants.³

With the treaty in his possession, Thomson set out for Lokoja boasting that "not a yard of ground from Timbuctoo to Akassa, or from Orna to Yoruba, had been left on which to plant the flag of the Fatherland." Not until the Company was granted a royal charter on July 10, 1886, was it really able to consolidate its paper claims.

The provisions of the charter have been discussed in Chapter Two. The General Powers of the Company, however, are worthy of further examination. The Charter stated:

The Company is hereby further authorized and empowered, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, to acquire and take by purchase, cession, or other lawful means, other rights, interests, authorities, or powers of any kind or nature whatever,

³Hertslet, I, 122. King Umuoru was both the King of Sudan and also the Sultan of Sokoto. Cowries (some kind of sea shells) were the local currency in vogue at the time. The same treaty was also signed with the King of Gandu, Ibid., 124.

in, over, or affecting the territories, lands, or properties comprised in several treaties aforesaid, or any rights, interests, authorities, or powers of any kind or nature whatever in, over, or affecting other territories, lands, or property in the region aforesaid, and to hold, use, enjoy, and exercise the same for the purposes of the Company and on the terms of this our Charter.⁴

On October 18, 1887, the British Protectorate of the Niger Districts, that is, the region assigned to the Royal Niger Company, was defined and notification issued thereof. The notification was given in the London Gazette. It stated:

The British Protectorate of the Niger Districts comprises the territories on the line of coast between the British Protectorate of Lagos and the right or western river bank of the mouth of the Rio del Rey. It further comprises all territories in the basin of the Niger and its affluents, which are or may be for the time being subject to the government of the National African Company Limited (now called the Royal Niger Company), in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the said Company, dated the 10th of July, 1886.⁵

Being now authorized by the Charter, Goldie's "energetic and unceasing political work" received increased momentum. He and the other agents of the Company began a campaign of rapid expansion. Treaties were signed with the native chiefs. The major areas of the Company's jurisdiction extended from Yola to Adamawa, near the borders of the Cameroons; Borgu in the hinterland of Lagos; the emirates of Sokoto and Gandu. Between 1884 and 1892 the Royal Niger Company had negotiated an impressive list of treaties.⁶ The treaties were formally approved by the Foreign Office. Thus, the Royal Niger Company acquired an overwhelming territory in which it traded and ruled.

With both commercial and political authority granted to the Company,

⁴Ibid., 126.

⁵Ibid., 127.

⁶Ibid., 131-136.

Goldie developed a grandiose policy of operation. The policy included effective occupation of the territories. In order to do this it was imperative to check the constant slave raiding in the different towns and villages which were at war with one another. Finally, Goldie was determined to establish diplomatic control over the Emirates of Sokoto and Gandu "backed by sufficient military force to hit hard blows, whenever military action became necessary."⁷ Goldie, in pursuance of his expansion policy, organized a net-work of administrative bureaucracy and created a private army known as the Royal Niger Constabulary made up of Hausas and Yorubas but with British officers. Customs duties and trade licenses were imposed to provide funds for administration. Effective political control of its vast area was now an accomplished fact. Courts of justice were also instituted.

The establishment of full political and commercial authority in the region thus acquired was not an easy one. The Company had difficulties from three fronts: the Germans, the French, and the natives. By the terms of the Company's charter, the British Government had expressly stated that, "nothing in this our Charter shall be deemed to authorize the Company to set up or grant any monopoly of trade." In other words, trade in the territory was supposed to be free, but it was not. In 1887, a German merchant, Hoenigsberg, attempted to break the Company's trade monopoly by entering the Niger, and then deliberately refusing to obey the Customs rules. Because of this infringement of the Company's Custom regulations, his cargo of salt was seized. At Nupe (Northern Nigeria) he tried to intrigue against the Company, but he

⁷Cook, 93. Sir Taubman Goldie to Captain Charles Orr, Feb. 2, 1911. This letter was not published. It was secured by Cook by personal request from Sir Charles Orr. Ibid., 28.

was arrested, tried at Asaba (administrative headquarters of the Company), found guilty, and ordered to leave the country. The difficulty with the Germans arose from the Company's prohibition of German importation of gin into the Company's territory. The Anglo-German conflict in Nigeria was resolved on November 15, 1893, when both Governments signed an Agreement defining their respective boundaries and spheres of influence. The Agreement defined the spheres as follows:

...The boundary, drawn from the point on the right bank of the Old Calabar or Cross River, about 9°8' of longitude east of Greenwich, marked "Rapids" ...a straight line directed toward the center of the present town of Yola.

From that center....a line shall be drawn from the point on the left bank of the River Benue ...crossing the river ...direct to the point where the 13th degree of longitude east of Greenwich is intersected by the 10th degree of north latitude. From that point it shall go direct to a point on the southern shore of Lake Chad,...

The territory to the west of the boundary line traced in the present Agreement, and in the preceding above-quoted Agreement, shall fall within the British sphere of influence, those to the east of the line shall fall within the German sphere of interest.⁸

The Royal Niger Company had more serious difficulties with the French. The French colonial agent, Lieutenant Mizon, had tried unsuccessfully in 1889 to negotiate treaties with the natives of the Niger delta. His failure was due to the fact that the Company placed obstacles in his way and even instigated the natives (Patanis) to attack him. The Company, however, denied the charges leveled against it by Mizon.⁹ In 1894, both France and the Royal

⁸Hertslet, III, 913. See the Appendix for the map illustrating the boundary limits between Great Britain and Germany in West Africa.

⁹See Lieutenant Hourst, 470. For the English version of the Mizon case, see Burns, 150.

Niger Company laid claims to Borgu on the hinterland of the Niger delta. The Royal Niger Company based its claim on the treaties which it had signed with the chief of Bussa.¹⁰ The French contended that the chief of Nikki alone had the power to sign a treaty for Borgu. Thus there ensued the Anglo-French "race to Nikki." Frederick Lugard, the agent of the Royal Niger Company, forestalled the French by signing a treaty with the chief of Nikki on November 10, 1894; five days later the French mission arrived only to find that Borgu had been lost to the Company. From that time Anglo-French relations became more seriously strained. It was not until 1898 that the Anglo-French contest on the Niger Districts was solved by the 1898 Convention which defined each Power's respective spheres on both the west and east of the Niger.¹¹

Apart from international complications, the Company faced internal crises. The natives and chiefs of the Lower Niger had, for some decades, resented British merchants' entry into the interior. The granting of the Royal Charter to the Company had intensified existing difficulties. As the Company imposed its stringent Customs regulations, Brassmen (one of the tribes on the Lower Niger) were excluded from their former markets. They made repeated complaints to the Company and the Consuls. But no action was taken to lift the onerous regulations. Brassmen had to pay license taxes in order to trade in their former markets. The British Government took no action to improve the situation because, as Sir John Kirk (a Special Commissioner sent out later to inquire into the disturbances in Akassa) observed,

¹⁰Hertslet, I, 128. "Royal Niger Company and Boussa (Borgu), Jan. 20, 1890."

¹¹Hertslet, II, 789-790.

the Rules and Regulations that Brassmen complained of "were approved by Her Majesty's Government."¹² The Company in enforcing the Rules was, in fact, implementing the policy of the Government.

As resentment against the Company increased, Brassmen threatened to attack the Company's trade headquarters, Akassa. On January 29, 1895, the people of Brass, unable any longer to endure the exclusive policy of the Company, attacked Akassa. Most of the property of the Company was destroyed and many of the workers were killed, especially the African servants (Krumen). After the raid the several tribes joined in the looting that followed. It was only the appearance of a steamer, which was mistaken for a ship-of-war, that put an end to the raid.¹³

It was the Royal Niger Company that Brassmen regarded as their oppressor and enemy, not the British Government. This was a misleading view due to lack of true knowledge of the source of the power of the Company. John Kirk stated in his report that the Company had acted within its legal rights, even though the natives of Brass had been unfortunately treated. A part of the report, upholding the grievances and complaints of Brassmen, stated:

...The Rules in force are practically prohibitory to native trade, and the Brassmen are right in saying that this is so. They are for all intents and purposes excluded from the Niger if they are to respect these Regulations, for how could they possibly pay such a heavy license tax and sell at a profit goods on which duty had previously been paid to the Protectorate, thus placing them at a disadvantage ...to those who introduced the same article at Akassa or through Forcados at Ganagana, and paid duty to the Company's revenue only? Had the Brassmen been originally included in the Niger Territory ...none of the

¹²Quoted in Burns, 152.

¹³Ibid., 154.

above onerous Rules would have applied.¹⁴

Despite the fact that Brassmen had assured the British Consul that "we did not kill the Queen's men at all," meaning that it was the Company that they attacked, it was the Queen's Government that wreaked vengeance on Brassmen. Regardless of the loyal sentiments expressed by the chiefs of Brass a punitive expedition was launched to Brass. In February, 1895, the Consul-General arrived in Brass and summoned the chiefs to surrender. He demanded from them all their war-canoes and guns, the restoration of all property taken from Akassa, and a reasonable fine.¹⁵ The chiefs assured the Consul-General that they were not in any quarrel with the Queen's Government, but that they would continue to fight for their rights until the Company restored their markets to them. Their reply served as a pretext for attack. A naval force was organized and assembled in the creek under the command of Admiral Sir Frederick Bedford. An ultimatum was sent to the chiefs that unless they complied with the terms offered they would be attacked and punished. No time was given to the chiefs to decide on the matter. The blockade advanced with armed boats and guns. The Brassmen, mistaking the British flag for the Company's flag, fired at the squadron. There were some casualties.

On the following day a final ultimatum was addressed to the chiefs. They were indicted for having fired on the British forces and told that their town would be burned unless they submitted immediately. The chiefs were not given any time to consider the ultimatum as "any delay would merely give time for a further strengthening of the defences." Orders were given for

¹⁴Ibid., 152. "Report of Sir John Kirk on the Disturbances at Brass, Africa," No. 3, 1896.

¹⁵Ibid., 162.

immediate advance on the town. Sadly enough, the town was captured and burned on February 22, 1895. Some of the towns which took part in the earlier raid were also destroyed. Brassmen were now totally disarmed and their resistance collapsed. The policy of subduing native resistance still continued.

Soon after the Brass incident, the Company was involved in a struggle with the Emirs of Nupe and Ilorin. This period coincided with the era of Chamberlain's policy of aggressive imperialism. One of the powers given to the Royal Niger Company was the right to fight the slave trade. The Emirs of Nupe and Ilorin raided for slaves in some villages which were under the jurisdiction of the Company. Attempts to persuade the Emirs to give up their slave traffic proved futile. As slave-raiding was detrimental to peaceful trade the Company felt that the Emirs should be suppressed lest their interest would be jeopardized. Besides, the policy of political control over the territories meant that obnoxious native rulers were to be removed and puppet heads subservient to British administrators installed in office. In appearance the "do-nothing kings" were the rulers whereas, in fact, the officials were the actual political overlords.

On January 6, 1897, the Company decided to take action against the Emirs. A force of five hundred men of the Royal Niger Constabulary, with some British officers and native carriers, marched from Lokoja in pursuit of the Emir of Nupe's army which was raiding for slaves. The Company's force was commanded by Major Arnold. On January 23, 1897, the Company's forces crossed the Niger and advanced towards Bida (within the Nupe Emirate). The Emir's forces offered a determined resistance but proved powerless before the more disciplined Company force. After four days of heavy fighting resulting in several casualties, the town was captured. The Emir fled and

another Emir was installed in his place. Soon after the conquest of the Emir of Nupe the Company's forces recrossed the Niger and moved down to Ilorin. As the forces approached the precincts of Ilorin, hostilities began between the Company's forces and those of the Emir Ilorin. They confronted each other in a decisive war of conquest. As at Bida the Emir's forces surrendered to the Company's army and on February 16, 1897, Ilorin was occupied after a futile resistance. The Emir surrendered and had to sign a treaty with the Company. One general result of the conquest of both Nupe and Ilorin was the recognition of the Company's suzerainty in these areas. Slave-raiding was declared abolished and the political authority of the Company, after years of resistance, was finally extended to Nupe and Ilorin.¹⁶

The Anglo-French Convention of 1898 gave the British Government the "Empire of Sokoto."¹⁷ It was realized by the British Government (especially Chamberlain) that unless the frontiers were effectively controlled, further trouble might be expected. Consequently, the Company started a more vigorous campaign of grafting the provinces within the Sultan of Sokoto's domain. In the Sultan's Empire, slave raiding was still chronic and local rulers tenaciously defied the intrusion of the agents of the British Government. By 1899 the British Government adopted a new policy: to take direct control of all the areas of Nigeria. Chartered Company administration was regarded as a transitional form of government. In declaring the limits of the Niger Districts the Government specifically stated that the said

¹⁶The best sources for the conquest of the Emirs of Nupe and Ilorin are Burn's History of Nigeria, chapter XIII; S. Vandeleur, Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger. London: Methuen & Co., 1898, passim. Vandeleur was one of the commanders.

¹⁷Garvin, III, 223.

districts were "for the time being subject to the government of the National African Company."¹⁸ In other words, the holding was not intended to be permanent. As Lady Lugard said, "it was undesirable that territories, of which the defense was provided at public expense, should be administered at private discretion."¹⁹ In a letter dated June 15, 1899, the Prime Minister notified the Secretary to the Treasury of the Government's intention to disinherit the Royal Niger Company. A part of the letter stated:

The Marquess of Salisbury has for some time past had under consideration the question of approaching the Niger Company with a view to relieving them of their rights and functions of administration on reasonable terms. His Lordship has arrived at the opinion that it is desirable on grounds of national policy that these rights and functions should be taken over by Her Majesty's Government now that the ratifications of the Anglo-French Convention of June 14, 1898, have been exchanged, and that the frontiers of the two countries have been clearly established in the neighborhood of the territories administered by the Company. The state of affairs ...makes it incumbent on Her Majesty's Government to maintain an immediate control over the frontier and fiscal policy of British Nigeria such as cannot be exercised so long as that policy is dictated and executed by a Company....²⁰

British policy was to acquire and rule the territories but such assumption of direct political control was practical only when circumstances became auspicious. The Company was used to lay the foundations of future British rule in Nigeria. The Company had done a tremendous work in the Niger Districts in stopping the slave trade and in restoring order and peace.

¹⁸Hertslet, I, 127. The underscored words are mine.

¹⁹Flora L. Shaw (Lady Lugard), A Tropical Dependency. London: Oxford University Press, 1905, 362. Lady Lugard was the wife of Lord Frederick Lugard who was the first High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria and the first Governor General of Nigeria in 1914.

²⁰British Sessional Papers, 1899, LXIII, 3. "Royal Niger Company." This letter is quoted in full in Burns, 156 and in part in Cook, 111.

Speaking to members of his Company, Goldie said:

Let us never forget that it was the success of our Company in this new departure and the emulation aroused by its successful enterprise, which not only gave security to the Oil Rivers and Lagos, but also gave fresh life and energy to the other West African possessions which had previously stagnated on the seaboard.²¹

Chamberlain was by 1899 bent upon carrying his "scientific" administration into Nigeria and of building up the "underdeveloped estates." He had a very strong belief that "Nigeria was a most suitable place to try out his theories of colonial development."²² Being the most accessible British colony in Africa, Chamberlain considered that Nigeria should be ruled by the Government and not by the Royal Niger Company. In a letter to Lord Selborne on September 19, 1897, Chamberlain indicated that "the best course will be to expropriate [the Company], lock, stock, and barrel."²³ Negotiations about transfer of the powers and rights of the Company to the Imperial Government started by late 1899. On December 28, 1899, the Company's charter was revoked by the Government and on January 1, 1900, the Imperial Government took over the control of both Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria. The edict revoking the charter stated:

The Queen has been pleased, by Letters Patent under the Great Seal, dated December 28, 1899, to revoke the Royal Charter dated July 10, 1886, granted to the Royal Niger Company

²¹Cook, 113. Speech of Goldie at the last meeting of the Royal Niger Company. "Report of Proceedings, August 23, 1899."

²²Ibid., 149.

²³Garvin, III, 210.

Chartered and Limited, then the National African Company Limited.²⁴

In the revocation of the Charter of the Royal Niger Company, the Company surrendered to the Government all administrative powers, the benefit of all Treaties made, the lands, property, mining, and other rights acquired by the Company.²⁵ But the Government did not expropriate the Company "lock, stock, and barrel" as Chamberlain had threatened. The Company was to be paid a Consolidated Fund not exceeding £ 865,000 after it "had given account of sums due to it."²⁶ Also the Company was to own certain plants ("factories") and trade assets with "certain exceptions." Added to these, the Government undertook to pay the Company for a period of ninety-nine years from the revocation of the Charter, one-half of the royalties from the minerals mined between the Niger and a line drawn from Yola to Zinder (northern tip of Northern Nigeria).

As the Company's flag, "Ars, Pax, Jus" was hauled down, the British Union Jack was hoisted in its place. The Company then reverted to its former position--an ordinary trading company. It is really difficult to assess with any degree of certainty what the Company did for Nigeria. As the former Governor of Nigeria, Sir Alan Burns trenchantly remarked, "how far the Royal Niger Company's administration was of benefit to the country is a matter of opinion."²⁷ The Company out of a mixture of patriotic and commercial motives

²⁴British and Foreign State Papers, 1898-1899, LXXXX, 124; Hertslet, I, 156.

²⁵British and Foreign State Papers, 1898-1899, LXXXX, 1031.

²⁶Ibid., 1032.

²⁷Burns, 158.

did its utmost to restrict the slave-traffic, and brought to the people of the interior "the benefits of British justice, before any direct form of government could be provided." These social "benefits" were introduced at the expense of native trade. The native traders within the jurisdiction of the Company lost their markets because of the monopolistic nature of the Company. Consequently, instead of the "silken love and affection" which Gladstone espoused in the relation of annexed colonies and the supreme government, persistent hatred and irritation were aroused by the Company. The Akassa incident was a case in point. As for contributing to the prosperity of the dependency, the Company helped in no small measure by its pioneering enterprise but mainly for its own benefit alone. As the monopolistic Regulations of the Company were stringently enforced, the probability of mutual benefit of the countries' resources (that is, between the Company and the natives) was ruled out. The Company fixed its own prices for the products from the interior especially palm oil and palm kernels. Hence the native producers scarcely traded at a reasonable profit. On the revocation of its charter the Company was changed to the Niger Company, Limited. In 1920 the control of the Company was assumed by Lever Brothers, Limited. Now, the Company has been absorbed into the United Africa Company (U.A.C.), which operates throughout West Africa.²⁸

As soon as the Company's Charter was revoked, Chamberlain launched his "scientific" administration. In the Niger Coast Protectorate and Lagos (united in 1906) a net-work of roads, railways, and harbors were started to facilitate trade and administration of the interior. Perhaps Chamberlain was

²⁸Ibid.

aware of the charges of the French regarding the underdeveloped nature of British colonies in West Africa. Lieutenant Hourst indicted British colonial policy when he wrote:

...There are no means of communication between one place and another....We have done better than the English on the Upper Niger; our colonization is far superior to theirs. On the Lower Niger they have neither telegraph wires, for these go no further than Akassa and Brass, at the mouth of the river, no road at all to be compared with our line of revictualling posts, and of course, need we add? they have no railway!"²⁹

The railways constructed under Chamberlain's regime led to the extension of political control in the hinterland of Lagos. By the treaties of 1899 Ibadan, Oyo, Ilesha, and Abeokuta were included in the British Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.³⁰ In Lagos, too, trade received a tremendous impulse.

<u>IMPORTS</u>	<u>EXPORTS</u> (in £000) ³¹
1895 816,000	985,000
1895 (rubber) _____	270,000
1896 (rubber) _____	348,000

The territory expropriated from the Royal Niger Company was entrusted to Sir Frederick Lugard who was the first High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria in 1900. The Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, therefore, came into being; that is, what was the vast hinterland of the Company. The Niger Company's territory was included in the Niger Coast Protectorate (changed to Southern Nigeria). The administration of Northern Nigeria by Lugard goes beyond the period under review. But it is helpful to know that it was Lugard who

²⁹Lieutenant Hourst, 488.

³⁰The treaties were abrogated in 1914 after the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria.

³¹Pim, 60. Rubber was a new commodity which almost became a rival to the palm oil trade. Under British encouragement the export increased considerably.

introduced in 1914 indirect Rule (administration by native rulers under the guidance of British officials) into Northern Nigeria and who was also responsible for the unification of the North and the South in 1914.

CHAPTER SEVEN

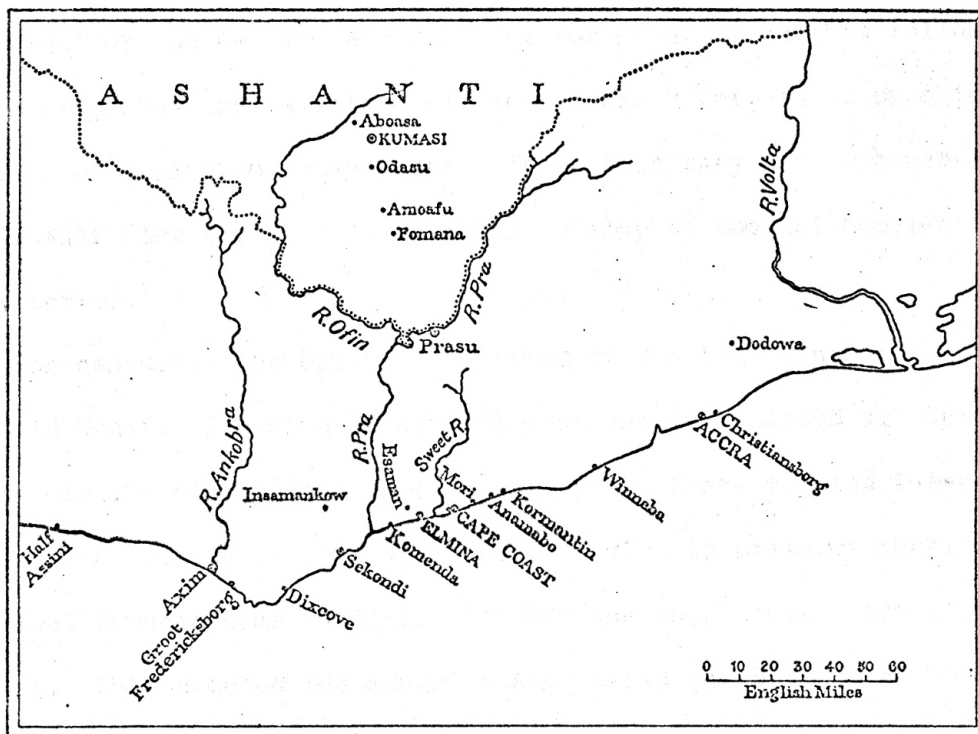
THE GOLD COAST

The Gold Coast, like the other West African countries, felt the impact of the West by way of commercial contact. The Portuguese were the first European people to come to the Gold Coast. The name "Gold Coast" was applied to the area by the Portuguese because of the abundance of gold. In 1471 the Portuguese established trade in gold at Elmina and in 1482 they built a fort there for the purpose of trade. In a short time, however, Portuguese monopoly was invaded and the Gold Coast soon became the arena of international rivalry.

The first British post on the Gold Coast was established at Koramantin in 1631. In due course more British forts were built at the coast such as Accra, Winneba, Anamabo, Komenda, Sekondi, Dixcove, and others. By the 1800's the British had in fact established a strong foothold on the coast. Until 1821 the administration of the coastal territories was undertaken by a trading company--the African Company of Merchants. As was the case of the Royal Niger Company in Nigeria, the African Company of Merchants, formed for commercial purposes, became simultaneously a political administrator under Government subsidy. The Government granted the Company an annual subsidy of £13,000.¹

Company rule was abrogated in 1821 and the British Government assumed direct control of the coastal possessions. Sir Charles McCarthy became the

¹David E. Apter, Ghana in Transition. New York: Aheneum Co., 1903, 31.



Sketch Map to illustrate early settlements on the Gold Coast and the Ashanti Wars.

first Governor, with Sierra Leone as his headquarters. From the appointment of McCarthy until 1900 nothing but civil strife raged in the Gold Coast. An examination of the records of the activities of the British administrators in West Africa would show that the officials were a mixed lot. "Some of them ... were zealous and clear-headed imperialists religiously dedicated to the service of Great Britain in West Africa; others ...were drawn from the barbarians of the Western world."² As for McCarthy and his followers, they were aggressive imperialists. All they aspired for was to push the political frontier of their Home Government. To do this they had to break the power of the Ashanti King whose power extended to many of the neighboring tribes in the interior.

For centuries the British had tried to penetrate into the interior of the Gold Coast. The King of Ashanti had equally resisted all British movements into the hinterland. For several years there existed internecine war between the British and the Ashantis who tried to preserve their virgin land. The final debacle came in 1873. In 1872 the Dutch ceded fort Elmina to the English. This angered the Ashantis who feared the British becoming the sole authority over the Guinea Coast. A new war broke out. This time the British determined to settle the question once and for all. Troops were brought from England, commanded by Sir Garnet Wolseley. Kumasi, the Ashanti capital, was besieged. Wolseley charged with relentless brutality until the King of Ashanti, Kofi Karikari, surrendered. As the power of the King made a British protectorate of the Gold Coast almost impossible, a deal with him was inevitable. On the 13th and 14th of February, 1874, a Treaty of Peace was

²K. O. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956, 127.

concluded between the Government and King Karikari at Fomana.³ This treaty was a landmark in the history of British penetration into the Gold Coast hinterland. By Article III of the Treaty, the Ashanti chief was induced to renounce all rights to or homage from the neighboring tribes which were formerly subjects of the Kingdom of Ashanti. By Article IV of the same Treaty, the King also renounced for ever all pretensions to the supremacy over Elmina, or over any other areas and tribes connected with the Dutch. In addition, the King was enjoined to abolish human sacrifices and to pay a large indemnity to the British Government (50,000 ounces of gold). As a natural consequence of the defeat, the power of the Ashanti confederacy was seriously undermined, and the preponderant power of the King was considerably diminished.

The Ashanti War marked a definite step in the extension of British authority in the Gold Coast. Having subdued the Ashanti Kingdom the British Government decided to assume full control over the coastal areas by annexing them as the Gold Coast Colony.⁴ This policy of annexation had two important consequences. In the first place, the annexation of the coastal regions was a unilateral action by the British riding roughshod over the local aspirations of the Fantis. The Fantis were the allies of the British against the Ashanti King. In 1844 an agreement was signed between the British and the chief of Fanti. By this "Bond," as it is popularly called, the Fantis acknowledged the "power and jurisdiction" of the British Government. In other words, the

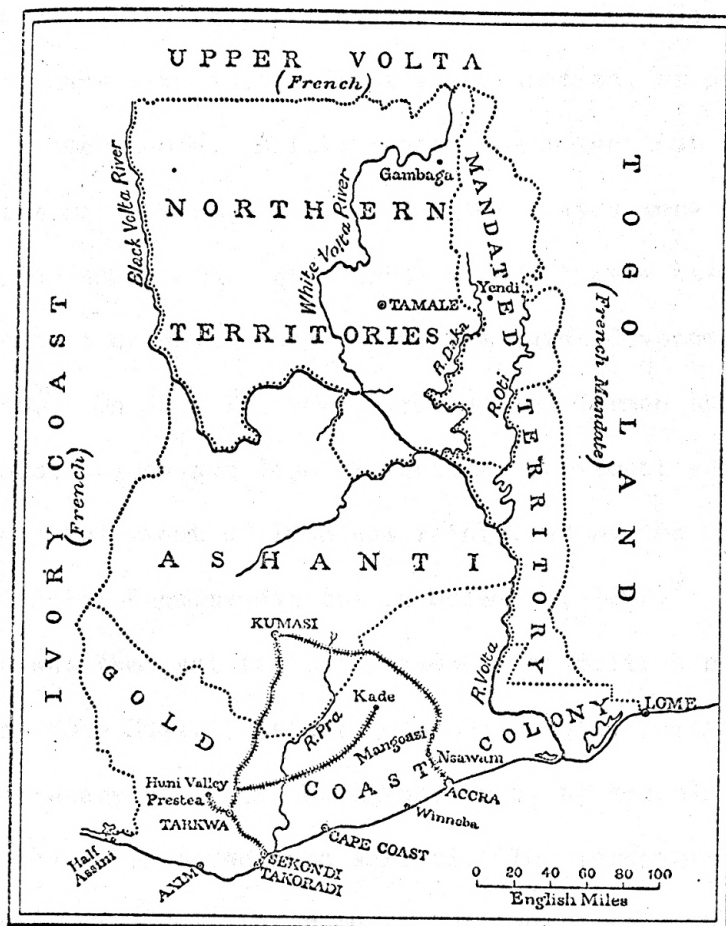
³See Hertslet, I, 65-67 for extracts of the peace. The terms of the King's petition to the British Government are treated in Henry Brackenbury, The Ashanti War. London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1874, II, 318-319.

⁴British and Foreign State Papers, 1882-1883, LXXIV, 605-616.

British Government was to act as protector and defender of Fanti from the iron hand of the King of Ashanti. This trusteeship, the Fantis believed, was to be relinquished in the future as they had no understanding of the Fanti tribe losing its independence. As the aspirations of the Fanti Confederacy (formed in 1871) became frustrated by the annexation act, its relation with the British Government thereafter was strained. Secondly, the annexation of the coastal tribes was a prelude to the aggressive hinterland penetration from 1885.

The "Scramble" for West Africa extended to the Gold Coast. Frequent bickerings ensued among European Powers for spheres of influence in that area. In July, 1884, the Germans under the leadership of Dr. Nachtigal declared a Protectorate over Togoland (eastern border of the Gold Coast); the French also were entrenched in Ivory Coast (the western border). Both France and Germany were frantically campaigning for access into the hinterland of the Gold Coast. The presence of the French and the Germans seemed to constitute a threat to British interests in the Gold Coast and to bring a change in the Government's colonial policy. "If British authority were not extended over Ashanti [that is the interior]," the Government policy-makers thought, "our French and German rivals would soon step in in our stead and cut off the Gold Coast from its natural hinterland."⁵ The long age of easy supremacy on the Gold Coast was now gone forever. Trade, which had actuated Britain's first entry into the Gold Coast, now gave way to the quest for political control over the Colony as well as the hinterland. The extension of British authority into Ashanti and the Northern Territories formed the

⁵Evans, 108.



Sketch Map of the Gold Coast, Ashanti and the Northern Territories.

Source: Evans, 111.

major story of the Gold Coast from 1885 to 1900. As Lord Wolseley, the British army commander during the Ashanti war (1874) pithily remarked,

any attempt to relate the history of our early relations with Ashantee [Ashanti] ...would certainly redound neither to the credit of our arms nor to the intelligence of our Ministers.⁶

The Berlin Act of 1885 had set the scheme for "the rape of Africa." At the Conference of Berlin British interests in the Gold Coast were recognized. To consolidate these interests, effective occupation, as provided by the Berlin Act, was inevitable. British agents were sent out to the Gold Coast to make treaties with native chiefs. Various states were placed under British protection.⁷ On January 13, 1886, Letters Patent were issued making the Gold Coast Settlements a colony separate from the joint Government of the Gold Coast and Lagos.⁸ On July 14, 1886, British and German spheres of influence in the Gold Coast Colony and Togo Protectorate, respectively, were defined. The Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 was reinforced by the British and German Commissioners' Joint Recommendations in December, 1887.⁹

The stage was then set for the pursuance of British policy in the interior of the Gold Coast. Ashanti was the target. Petitions had been sent to the Secretary of State, Lord Knutsford, by merchants asking that British authority be extended into Ashanti. The merchants complained that the Ashantis prevented "all intercourse but their own with the waterside

⁶Quoted from Claridge, I, 529.

⁷See Hertslet, I, 69-72.

⁸Ibid., I, 69.

⁹Ibid., I, 890.

nations." It was observed that it was still "not the custom" for traders to visit the Ashantis.¹⁰ To use the terminology of James S. Coleman, the Ashanti's "early resistance movement"¹¹ was directed against British-sponsored forces. Yet it was not mere hostility that motivated the Ashanti resentment of British penetration; the objective was explicitly to maintain "the self-government and independence of [the Gold Coast] as a nation-state existing on the basis of equality in an international state system."¹²

In spite of all protests and resistance against British penetration, the British Government was determined to penetrate the Ashanti Kingdom by a leap-frog process. The policy at first was access through moral influence. In 1887 two British officials, Captain R. La T. Lonsdale and E. A. Barnett were sent to Ashanti on a peace-making mission.¹³ It was in the presence of the British representative, Barnett, that a new king of Ashanti, Prempeh, was elected with the title of Kwaku Dua III. He was given the care of the "Royal Stool" (the symbol of power and authority in Ashanti) and referred to thereafter as King of Kumasi.¹⁴ No matter what half-hearted measures were adopted by the British, their primary objective was to include Ashanti in the Protectorate.

¹⁰British Sessional Papers, 1865, V. Report from the Select Committee on Africa (Western Coast), reply to question 3,268.

¹¹James S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958, 170.

¹²Ibid., 169.

¹³Kimble, 278.

¹⁴Ibid.; Barnett to Brandford Griffith, March 29, and May 9, 1888, Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of the Gold Coast, London, 1888, C5615.

The Colonial Office was then anxiously watching the restoration of peace in Ashanti. Barnett added to the chorus urging the Government to appoint a British Resident there. While local British administrators in the Gold Coast Colony were in haste to extend British authority into the hinterland, the Colonial Office was prepared to pursue the policy slowly. The Governor, Brandford Griffith, had advised that the Ashanti territory should be brought under British jurisdiction to forestall French colonial ambitions in the Gold Coast hinterland.¹⁵ By 1888, of course, the French were once more carrying out exploration schemes in the Gold Coast hinterland. The Governor also warned against German encroachments. To this, Sidney Web, a young official in the Colonial Office replied:

I should pause before going further north. It would no doubt be inconvenient to have the Germans behind our back at the Gold Coast, but ...the Gold Coast Colony has cost England some six lives this year alone. Is it worth extending?¹⁶

German ambition in Ashanti posed no serious threat to the Colonial Office. The Secretary of State, Lord Knutsford (then Holland) wrote: "If Ashanti is to be annexed to any European power let it be by the Germans."¹⁷ Such apparent indifference was characteristic of British action in West Africa. The British never took any serious action on the west coast of Africa without inventing some explanation for it--an outside force or factor necessitating its intervention. In any case, the diplomatic haggling in Europe, combined

¹⁵CO/96/173. Confidential Despatch of April 22, 1886, from Brandford Griffith to Granville. This and other C.O. information was obtained by correspondence.

¹⁶CO/96/88. Minute of August 22, 1887, by Sidney Web.

¹⁷CO/96/188. Minute of September 21, 1887, by H. T. Holland.

with the competitive penetration in the interior, made the British Government adopt a strong forward interior policy. On August 10, 1889 the Anglo-French Agreement was signed. By Article III of this treaty Great Britain was given a free hand in Ashanti.¹⁸ Anglo-German frontiers were also defined on July 1, 1890. The British Government was therefore given full liberty of political action in the Ashanti Kingdom to the north of the Gold Coast Colony.

The period of apparent friendliness between the Ashantis and the British (1874-1888) came to an end with the enstoolment of King Prempeh. Prempeh was a strong man who refused to be subservient to the British and claimed to remain independent as of old. His predecessor had signed a treaty to keep the road from Kumasi to the River Prah open for British trade, and to prevent human sacrifices. His authority over neighboring tribes had also been checked by the treaty. King Prempeh was ambitious to restore the prestige of Ashanti by bringing the various peoples who had been under Ashanti rule back to their earlier allegiance. Such moves by King Prempeh were intolerable to the British administrators who did not want to see a strong and united Ashanti.¹⁹ King Prempeh refused the request that a British Resident be sent to Ashanti. Several futile efforts were made to persuade King Prempeh to accept British protection over Ashanti. In a letter to the Governor on May 7, 1891, King Prempeh wrote:

¹⁸Hertslet, I, 77-79.

¹⁹CO/96/151. Minute of October 6, 1883, by R. H. Meade; "We don't want a strong united Ashanti." Meade was the Permanent Under-Secretary in the Colonial Office.

I am happy to say we have arrived at this conclusion, that my Kingdom of Ashanti ...must remain independent as of old, at the same time to be friendly with all white men....Believe me, Governor, that I am happy to inform you, that the cause of Ashanti is progressing.²⁰

King Prempeh was to enjoy his "independence as of old" for only five years before the Kingdom disintegrated; and the Governor watched patiently to "gather the fruit when it is ripe." The British continued their policy of expansion by signing treaties of "friendship and freedom of trade" with dissident chiefs of the north, who wished to assert their independence of Ashanti. By 1893 events were building up to a climax. In that year King Prempeh attempted to attack a neighboring tribe, Attabubu, which was under British protection. A strong warning was issued to King Prempeh by the Acting Governor, F. M. Hodgson. A force of Hausas under a British commander, Sir Francis Scott, was dispatched to Kumasi. Both Hodgson and Scott urged that Ashanti be annexed without further delay. Their views were sympathetically received at the Colonial Office. One of the Secretary's minutes recorded in the Colonial Office stated:

As regards Ashanti the present moment seems more favorable than we may see again. The King is cowed and the bulk of the people wish for protection, so the time is ripe for a bold stroke such as tells with savages. The Colony is rich and can afford the outlay (say £10,000) which will be necessary for a few years.²¹

Lord Ripon, then the Secretary of State in Gladstone's Liberal Cabinet, postponed the inevitable. He refused to support the "forward policy" of the Governor. Repudiating Hodgson's drastic action he wrote: "I do not desire to

²⁰Quoted from Kimble, 281, King Prempeh to Brandford Griffith, May 7, 1891.

²¹CO/96/238, Minute of December 21, 1893, by J. Branston.

annex Ashanti in name or in fact and thereby greatly to increase the responsibilities of the Gold Coast Government."²² The refusal to annex Ashanti outright was based on the economic factor, which was the general argument of Gladstone's Government against annexation. The Secretary of State, however, suggested that the Governor seek a via media, by making treaties of friendship with the King instead of using force. The King was to be persuaded to accept a British Resident in Kumasi "as the Agent of this Government, and as your friend and advisor."²³ The Governor then wrote to King Prempeh to this effect. The reply to his letter was delayed because King Prempeh was observing the funeral celebration of his sister and also because he was being placed on the "Golden Stool."²⁴ In June, King Prempeh finally sent a reply to Governor Griffith through his courtiers. The Governor refused to receive the King's ambassadors personally, "as their rank," he stated, "was not such as to make them worthy of having an interview with me."²⁵

In the mean time, exaggerated reports of the enstoolment ceremony were sent to the British administrators at the Coast. Atrocious stories of human sacrifice and "dreadful slaughter of human victims" were circulated around as being connected with King Prempeh's enstoolment. The Governor refused to recognize the enstoolment, alleging that it was a sham ceremony, performed by

²²CO/96/238, Minute of January 15, 1894, by Ripon.

²³CO/96/243, Hodgson to Ripon, February 26, 1894.

²⁴The "Golden Stool" was the outward sign of sovereignty and the object of greatest reverence among the Ashantis. As they said of it, it was their "spirit."

²⁵CO/96/247, Bradford Griffith to Ripon, June 28, 1894.

selected puppets.²⁶ In September, 1894, the Governor strongly recommended that a strong mission should be sent to Kumasi if the King still delayed in replying to the British proposals.²⁷ Once again the Secretary of State reiterated: "it is not the policy of H.M.'s Govt. to annex Ashantee, and that it should be very unacceptable to us to advance in that direction."²⁸ It seemed the Governor was acting on the prejudices of merchants and missionaries, who protested against the restriction of trade in Ashanti, and the "revolting, cruel and savage iniquities" reported by missionaries. In any case, no strong action was taken by the Liberal Government until 1895.

King Prempeh temporized before giving a reply to Governor Brandford Griffith. He consulted other Ashanti chiefs and they reached a decision to send a delegation to the Queen in England in protest against the invasion of the independence of Ashanti. Hearing of the proposed delegation, the Governor did all he could to discredit King Prempeh and his envoys. On January 25, 1895, the Governor wrote to Ripon (the Secretary of State) with all blatant cynicism:

As the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, so also the Ashanti cannot change the natural bent of his mind in the direction of deceit, hypocrisy, mendacity, treachery, and unreliability.²⁹

The irate Governor urged the Secretary of State to deal a crushing blow to

²⁶For the Chieftaincy controversy see British Sessional Papers, 1896, LVIII, 801.

²⁷CO/96/247, Brandford Griffith to Ripon, Sept. 28, 1894.

²⁸CO/96/248, Conversation between Ripon and Hodgson, Oct. 23, 1894.

²⁹CO/96/254, Confidential Dispatch of January 25, 1895, Brandford Griffith to Ripon.

Ashanti which would bring it under control.³⁰ The defiance of "this petty King" did, eventually, cause some exasperation in the Colonial Office, but the use of military force was not sanctioned. The matter was referred to Sir William Maxwell who soon replaced Griffith as Governor. His instruction was to secure a peaceful settlement. In any case, the King's delegation in London was not received by either the Secretary of State or the Queen. The Ashanti were informed that they could not be received.

Events had been moving rapidly to a crisis. In September, 1895, the Liberal Government was replaced by Salisbury's Conservative Cabinet. With the coming of a new Government, there was to be a new policy. Joseph Chamberlain was appointed as the new Colonial Secretary and Maxwell as the Governor of the Gold Coast. No sooner was Chamberlain in Office than he entered into a deadly conflict with King Prempeh. In the Gold Coast Maxwell formulated his new policy which synchronized with Chamberlain's strong interior policy in West Africa. The Governor was to meet the King in person and persuade him to accept British protection in Ashanti, guarantee freedom of trade between the coast and the interior, and abolish human sacrifices. If the King refused, then an ultimatum threatening military action would be sent to him. According to Maxwell, all the other Ashanti chiefs were to "hold aloof or take the consequences."

At this time, too, British merchants were urging the British Government to establish British administration in Ashanti. The London Chamber of Commerce (African Trade Section) wrote to the Colonial Secretary alleging that commerce had been impeded in Ashanti. The letter stated, in part:

³⁰Ibid., Telegram from Brandford Griffith to Ripon, Feb. 12, 1895.

Icall your attention to the continued unsettled state of the country and the hinderances to trade caused thereby, and to urge upon Her Majesty's Government the great desirability of taking immediate steps for the establishment of a system of administration in Ashanti, or for the appointment of a British resident in that country.³¹

The reply from the Colonial Office, dated August 22, 1895, stated that the question of the policy to be adopted regarding Ashanti "is still engaging [the Colonial Secretary's] attention."³² The letter pointed out, however, that Ashanti "is not in a disturbed state." On September 25, 1895, the Liverpool Merchants wrote to the Colonial Office in support of the London Chamber of Commerce.

Governor Maxwell had made his "forward policy" clear to Chamberlain. In a cablegram sent to the Governor in September, 1895, the Colonial Secretary sanctioned Maxwell's proposals, adding, unfortunately, that King Prempeh should pay the remaining indemnity imposed in 1874 or face a military expedition. Unable to appreciate that the old British hesitation had been abandoned, and that a new forward policy had been devised, King Prempeh delayed once again in giving a reply to the demands. As to the payment of the overdue indemnity, King Prempeh stressed that he had no resources to pay the 50,000 ounces of gold³³ required by the Colonial Office. Indeed, "it was not obduracy that solely governed [King Prempeh's] action; it was the awareness of the poverty of his Kingdom."³⁴

³¹British Sessional Papers, 1896, LVIII, 810. London Chamber of Commerce to the Colonial Office, August 3, 1895.

³²Ibid., 813.

³³F. M. Bourret, The Gold Coast. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1949, 24.

³⁴Ibid.

As in the previous year, King Prempeh hesitated in accepting the terms imposed. Chamberlain, however, was a man of his word. An ultimatum was sent to the King: either to accept the proffered treaty or face military intervention. At this juncture, King Prempeh decided to plead for peace. He sent an envoy to London to meet the Colonial Secretary. Chamberlain was adamant. Pleas from Members of Parliament to accede to the request of the King's delegates had no effect on him. Writing to the Permanent Under-Secretary (Sir Robert Meade) on October 10, 1895, he said:

The attempt to excite English sympathy for the King of Ashanti is a fraud on the British public. He is a barbarous chief, who has broken the Treaty, permitted human sacrifices, attacked friendly chiefs, obstructed trade, and failed to pay the fine inflicted on him after the war; [that is, the Ashanti War of 1874] and the only proof he has ever given of civilization is to be found in the fact that he has engaged a London solicitor to advocate his interests.³⁵

Chamberlain was determined to subdue King Prempeh. The period of patience with the King had expired. Nothing else but complete military force would solve the issue. On November 8, 1895, Chamberlain wrote to the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, regarding the preparations for the Ashanti expedition:

The War Office has, I believe, prepared its plans, and it is very desirable that everything should be got in readiness at once. I should like to have the matter finished if possible before the meeting of Parliament.³⁶

On November 11, 1895, the War Office was told to make necessary preparations for the impending conflict.³⁷ Governor Maxwell was also instructed on what

³⁵Garvin, III, 22.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷British Sessional Papers, 1896, LVIII, 835.

to do.³⁸ The stage was then set. The King's plea for negotiation was dismissed. By December all plans were in readiness for the eventful debacle. In January, 1896, King Prempeh was attacked. His forces were no match for those of the Colonial Secretary and Maxwell. Consequently, the King surrendered and was forced to accept under duress "the protection of the Queen of England." This was not all; the continued presence of the King posed a serious threat to Britain's complete take-over of Ashanti and other regions of the hinterland. Hence, the King, his mother and some other members of his family were deported to the island of Seychelles (off the east coast of Africa). He remained a prisoner until 1924 when he was brought back; he was reinstated as the Paramount Chief of Kumasi in 1926.

With the removal of King Prempeh, the way was now open for British penetration into the hinterland. Ashanti was annexed outright and a British Resident appointed at Kumasi in 1896. Treaties were concluded with native chiefs of the Northern Territories (north of Ashanti) and so the areas were proclaimed British Protectorates.³⁹

As the British Government eventually gained access into the Gold Coast hinterland, British rule replaced native government. Attempts were made to restore order and peace. To all appearances, the country was now in peace under the new regime; beneath the surface, the country was seething with unrest. The Ashantis never took the bitter experience of foreign administration with resignation. The extension of British authority in the hinterland had its repercussions on the economic life of the country. The economic life

³⁸Ibid., 847-9. Chamberlain to Maxwell, Nov. 22, 1895.

³⁹Hertslet, I, 78.

of the Gold Coast was largely determined by its political history.⁴⁰ After the conquest of Ashanti, Chamberlain introduced his constructive program. Roads, railways, harbors, and waterways were constructed for the purpose of "giving an impetus to the trade of the Colony."⁴¹

The extensions of these systems of communication from the coast to the hinterland had two important effects. First, it led to the pushing of the "traders' frontier" which formerly hardly went beyond the River Prah. Second, it heralded the era of capitalistic exploitation. Prospectors and capitalists swarmed into the interior for land leases and mining concessions, thus leading to the new phenomenon of the "Gold Rush." Brackenbury, the Assistant Military Officer, had given an exaggerated account of the mineral resources of the land. "Gold is there in profusion, and to be had for the seeking."⁴² Consequently he recommended:

Let our Government prospect these mines; let acts be passed similar to those by which our railway companies are empowered to compel persons to sell their land at a fair price;...For if once the gold-mines were at work, there would be no further fear that the country would ever fall back into the hands of the Ashantis....⁴³

Gold mining in the Gold Coast received an increased stimulus after the Ashanti conquest of 1896. Chiefs were cajoled to sell common lands to British prospectors. The strangers who obtained mining concessions paid the

⁴⁰Pim, 44.

⁴¹British Sessional Papers, 1896, LVIII, 810. "Gold Coast Annual Report."

⁴²Brackenbury, II, 351.

⁴³Ibid., 352.

chiefs one third of the proceeds (the abusa system). Unscrupulous chiefs then bartered their rights with careless abandon.⁴⁴ Companies were formed for the purpose of exploiting the mineral resources. In 1895, for instance, the Ashanti Gold-fields Corporation was formed under the prospector, Mr. E. A. Cade. Cade succeeded in securing extensive concessions--mining, trading, rubber and timber extraction, and town building. The influx of commercial and mining enterprise in the Gold Coast had serious results on the economic and social organization of the country. Competition in commerce resulted in the formation of trade combines which dangerously displaced native traders. Trade monopoly by the British replaced the hitherto native trade. As far back as 1881, The Gold Coast Times (native owned newspaper) had urged the people not to be passive onlookers at the operations of "our foreign friends....They only came to benefit themselves alone....The land is ours."⁴⁵ Native attempts to form mining companies and so mine the gold directly failed for lack of adequate finance. Thus, British facilities in raising the capital virtually excluded native enterprise from the field.

The Gold mining operation was not just a private concern. The British Government staked its interest, too. In 1897, Governor Maxwell was authorized by the Colonial Secretary to spend £1,000 on the gold mining industry and to use Chinese miners.⁴⁶ The proposal to use Chinese labor constituted

⁴⁴By 1912 the prices rose significantly. Payment per five square miles was between £10-£12 per annum. If machinery was installed the price rose to £300. See Kimble, 21, footnote 1.

⁴⁵Kimble, 22, The Gold Coast Times, November 26, 1881.

⁴⁶Kimble, 24. The suggestion to use Chinese labor for the mines was even made by Brackenbury, II, 352.

a direct affront to the natives. On October 20, 1897, The Gold Coast Express protested:

We do not want the 'celestials' in West Africa on any account....China is large enough surely for her own people.⁴⁷

The Governor, in any case, used the Chinese in spite of all protests. The Colonial Secretary did not allow private enterprise to go far enough to overshadow Government interest. In 1899 Mr. Cade wrote to Chamberlain suggesting that his Corporation take over all the metalliferous, timber, water, and rubber rights of Ashanti. He offered to pay £ 5,000 down and a further £ 5,000,000 later. Chamberlain refused. He remarked, "Mr. Cade has a low opinion of my intelligence."⁴⁸

Chamberlain's "scientific" administration called for the extraction of taxes from the natives but not their participation in the government that vitally affected them. Direct taxes were imposed on the natives. The system of taxation was known as "hut tax." This meant the counting of the number of dwellings or houses (huts) and thus calculating the taxes accordingly. The hut tax was very unpopular for the natives felt that "taxation and representation should go hand in hand." To Governor Maxwell, consent or representation was not a prerequisite for taxation. He refused to consult the Chiefs and in 1897 imposed a flat rate of five shillings (5s) per annum on the natives. Native resistance to any form of taxation was so strong that in 1898 the draft of the House Tax Bill was shelved. The Governor did not

⁴⁷Quoted in Kimble, 24.

⁴⁸Ibid., Minute of April 13, 1899, by Chamberlain in the Colonial Office regarding Cade's letter of March 25, 1899.

anticipate any serious resistance for, as he said, "the natives of the Gold Coast have the lightest taxation burden all over the world."⁴⁹ This showed his misjudgment of the situation. The natives protested not because the taxes were high but because they were a direct invasion of their independence.

The hut tax having failed, the Government decided to substitute it with customs duty tax--a ten per cent ad valorem duty on certain goods. To Chamberlain "no taxation means no improvement" and that would not be tolerated. The resentment was more from the merchants. The general resistance to any form of taxation sprang from the awareness that it was "an alien form of economic coercion resulting from the new political order."⁵⁰ In 1900, Governor Hodgson who replaced Maxwell was determined to revive the direct tax in spite of the "recurring rows" of the people. He put forward two lines of action: taxes to be levied in Ashanti to recoup the expenses of the Government in Kumasi; the possession of the "Golden Stool" of Ashanti for, as he reasoned, the British Government could never completely subdue the Ashantis until the symbol of their nationhood was removed from them. When Governor Hodgson tried to implement his policy of taxing the people without their consent, another war broke out. The Governor and his forces were attacked by Ashanti troops who had been enraged by the Governor's action. On September 30, 1900, the Ashanti forces were crushingly defeated at Aboasa. The outcome of the defeat was the formal annexation of Ashanti. The administration of the country was placed under a Chief Commissioner. On

⁴⁹British Sessional Papers, 1893-94, LIX, 344, "Colonial Annual Reports," No. 88, Gold Coast.

⁵⁰Kimble, 306.

September 26, 1901, the Ashanti Order in Council defined the limits of Ashanti and the Northern Territories.⁵¹ The status symbols of office of King Prempeh were transferred to Queen Victoria. As she recorded in her Journal, "Lenchen, Christian, and Christle came to luncheon, and the latter gave me King Prempeh's umbrella, stool, and chair."⁵² The Gold Coast was then under British administration until 1957 when she became independent.

⁵¹See Hertslet, I, 77-78.

⁵²Buckle, The Letters of Queen Victoria. 3rd Series, III, 32.
"Extracts from the Queen's Journal."

CHAPTER EIGHT

SIERRA LEONE AND GAMBIA

Sierra Leone and the Gambia were the earliest British Colonies in West Africa, yet compared with Nigeria and the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and the Gambia have received very little attention. Sierra Leone was the administrative headquarters or capital of the British West African Settlements.

Sierra Leone was formerly a Portuguese colony. Towards the mid-sixteenth century the coastal peoples were invaded by Europeans of many nationalities. The slave trade attracted the Europeans to the vicinity of Sierra Leone where the trade in slaves was abundant. Although English merchants had established forts and trading stations in the early 1600's, it was only in 1788 that the British Government established a strong connection with Sierra Leone. In 1787 the British Government acceded to the urgings of Granville Sharp, a British slave abolitionist, to ship the freed slaves in England to Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone then became the "Province of Freedom" for the "Black Poor." The British Government, with the support of private contributors and humanitarians financed the settlement of the "unwanted vagrants," and by the agreement of August 22, 1788, secured for the new settlers lands and protection from King Nambaner, Chief of Sierra Leone.¹

The new settlers in Sierra Leone enjoyed a period of self-government for the "Protection and Preservation of their common Freedom" as their charter stated. But this was a temporary bonanza. In 1791 the private

¹Hertslet, I, 26.

investors who sponsored the settlement of the "Black Poor" demanded the control of the expenses of the settlers. Control of expenditure implied control of government. By Act of Parliament (1791) the Sierra Leone Company was incorporated and thirteen directors, including Granville Sharp, were empowered to govern the settlement as absentee governors. Consequently, the rule of the Company from 1791 to 1808 ended the self-governing "Province of Freedom" Sharp had envisioned.²

From 1788 Sierra Leone became, as Lord Salisbury said of it, "a Colony to which high value is attached."³ On account of financial difficulties, the Sierra Leone Company was relieved of its responsibilities by the British Government in 1808. On January 1, 1808, the Government took direct control of the settlement and proclaimed it a British Colony under the Governorship of T. P. Thompson. By an Act of Parliament of May 7, 1821, the Company transferred to the British Government "all the Forts, Possessions, and property then belonging to or held by them"⁴ By this Act, the British Government was invested with extensive rights on the West Coast of Africa "between the 20th degree of north latitude and 20th degree of south latitude." Sierra Leone, therefore, became a sphere of British influence.

For many years the progress of trade in Sierra Leone was very slow. The deadly nature of the climate, lack of transport facilities and the hostility of the natives (aborigines) stifled trade. Coupled with these difficulties

²Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone, London: Oxford University Press, 1962, 26.

³British Sessional Papers, 1892, LVI, 777; Lord Salisbury to Lord Dufferin, March 30, 1892.

⁴Hertslet, I, 29.

were the continued slave-raids in the interior of the colony. Hence the Colony was to remain little more than a chain of coastal settlements until 1885. In 1885 the general policy of hinterland penetration was extended to Sierra Leone. On May 18, 1885, the boundary of the areas ceded by the native chiefs of Sierra Leone to the British Government, generally known as Gallinas Territory, was defined. Also on November 11, 1885, the boundary between Sierra Leone and the Republic of Liberia was clearly fixed so that the British Government had a well-defined frontier in Sierra Leone.⁵ With the frontiers delimited, the Government accelerated its policy of hinterland penetration by making treaties with native chiefs, persuading them to accept British protection and thereby refusing to cede any portion of their territory to any other Power. The "peace begging" mission yielded handsome results to the British Government; many territories beyond the coast were absorbed into the existing Colony.

British interior policy (both Liberals and Conservatives) met, as in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, with native resistance. Some inland towns rebuffed the "peace-begging" tactics of the British administrators as a calculated drive to obtain a strong foothold in the hinterland. One of the tribal chiefs, Chief Kondo of Yoni, distrusted the method of British expansion. In November, 1885, he attacked Songo Town, to which British influence had been extended; some British subjects were captured as slaves. Sir Samuel Rowe, the Governor of the Colony, appealed to the Colonial Office for armed force to deal with the Yonis. In the meantime, the Colonial Secretary (Lord Granville), was reluctant to authorize any military expedition into

⁵Hertslet, I, 54; 57.

Sierra Leone. As Sierra Leone was a colonie de peuplement and not a colonie d'exploitation, Granville was moved by a "mawkish, hysterical humanitarianism," and so would not risk such an expedition.⁶ The Sierra Leone administration had been operating on a deficit. The strain of a military expedition would increase the insolvency of the Colony. So this matter of economy affected the Colonial Office's decisions. As Rowe was denied support from the Colonial Office for punitive action against the Yonis, he resorted to protracted peace negotiations. In 1886 a truce was signed between Chief Kondo and the British administration.

The warfare suspended in 1886 was resumed later. The Yonis were still enraged by the British process of territorial absorption. Two towns which were under British protection, Mende and Temne, were threatened. The chief of Mende took the offensive against the Yonis but was restrained by Police Inspector Revington in order to avert a general war. An overture of peace was sent to the Chief of Yoni but it was rejected.⁷ The basis of the rejection was that the British government paid the other tribes to keep peace and so should pay the Yonis, too. Then came the debacle. In October, 1886, the Yonis attacked and killed some Creoles (descendants of the Negro settlers) and destroyed some neighboring towns. As these towns were held to be within British territory, the Colonial Office sanctioned a military expedition under Colonel Sir Francis de Winton, to punish the Yonis. In November, Winton left Freetown with some detachments of the First West India Regiment, a small naval force, and fifty policemen. The opponents of the Yonis naturally

⁶Fyfe, 477.

⁷Ibid., 475.

became Winton's allies. The Yonis were attacked; and, after days of looting and burning, the Yonis surrendered. Yoni rice-fields were destroyed and the forces were allowed to plunder at will.

After the war, Kondo, the Yoni Chief, was removed and Le Masa was chosen as Bai Sherbro of Yoni. Those who were Yoni's allies were punished and some of the warriors deported to Elmina.⁸ As the Yoni resistance broke down, British administrators could introduce measures with careless disregard of popular feeling. In 1888, Governor Rowe decided to revive the House and Land Tax. The natives were determined never to submit to what they called "the height of Tyranny." As one of the Freetown (Capital of Sierra Leone) poets, J. T. MacFoy, put it:

No more taxations's paws
On our beloved shores
Shall e'er alight;...⁹

Exhausted and discouraged in his career in Sierra Leone, Governor Rowe died in 1888 without implementing his fiscal policy. In November, 1888, he was replaced by Sir James Hay as Governor.

It was clearly recognized by the Sierra Leone Administration that the trade and prosperity of the country depended on the tranquility of the adjoining producing areas. For this reason, annual stipends were promised to chiefs of the hinterland in return for their protection of commerce and guarantee to keep the inland roads open.¹⁰ One of the inland chieftains, Chief Mackiah, was charged with raiding one of the towns within the

⁸Ibid., 476.

⁹Quoted in Ibid., 477.

¹⁰British Sessional Papers, 1890-91, LV, 161.

jurisdiction of the British Government. Consequently, another military expedition was launched against Chief Mackiah's principal town, Fanimah. The capital city was destroyed, the chief captured and deported to Elmina, and peace restored.¹¹ With the removal of obstructionists and, in fact, the restoration of order and peace in the country, trade was encouraged, and the Colony's revenue increased considerably. The total value of exports in the Colony amounted to £ 319,719.¹² The administration was confident that greater results would be realized in the immediate future.

Since 1882 the French and the British had clashed in Sierra Leone. Each tried to outdo the other in persuading the natives to sign treaties of protection. By 1887 French territorial claims in Sierra Leone were enormous. On August 10, 1889, the spheres of the French and the English in Sierra Leone were defined. This treaty is a part of the arrangement between the two Powers in regard to their possessions on the West Coast of Africa.¹³ Territorial disputes continued to strain the relations of the French and the British. Not until 1904 did the two Powers have a definitive delimitation of their respective spheres of influence in Sierra Leone. France was allowed territories to the north and Britain was ceded those in the south. Also there was a definitive demarcation between the British Colony of Sierra Leone and French Guinea. These arrangements were conducted by exchange of notes between the French Foreign Minister Paul Cambon and British Foreign Minister Lansdowne.¹⁴

¹¹Ibid., 162.

¹²Ibid., 163, "Sierra Leone Annual Report, 1890."

¹³Hertslet, I, 729-730.

¹⁴Ibid., II, 815-6. Other boundary arrangements between the two Powers were made on January 21, 1895 (757); June 14 and 16, 1898 (794) by exchange of notes between Monson and Hanotaux.

The fear of French encroachments in Sierra Leone increased the tempo of British expansionist policy. In 1894, it was clear to the chiefs that the "peace-begging" days were over. Recalcitrant chiefs were punished or exiled by British administrators. In all but name, the whole country was a British Protectorate. Active British administration was felt in all walks of life. After demarcating the boundaries between the French and the British in 1895, the new Governor, Cardew, launched his "Railway Schemes in Sierra Leone." In introducing his railway scheme, Governor Cardew stated in his speech in May, 1895:

I am of the opinion that native products exist in large quantities, and only require cheap means of transport to reach the markets in Freetown or elsewhere.¹⁵

In order to raise money for his construction program, Cardew introduced once again the hated hut tax. As usual, there was rebellion and resentment everywhere. Only with the help of the army and police were the people suppressed. In 1896, the country was proclaimed a British Protectorate and Cardew's project was continued in spite of native opposition until 1900. In the same year the country, in common with the other West African Colonies, was fully under British regime. It remained as a British Protectorate until 1961 when it became independent.

For some years Sierra Leone and the Gambia were ruled under one government. In 1821 the Gambia was annexed to Sierra Leone, and in 1843 it was created as a separate colony with its own Governor. From 1866, however, the Gambia was governed again from Sierra Leone as a part of the government of the West African Settlements. It reverted to a separate administration

¹⁵British Sessional Papers, 1895, LXXI, 66. "Colonial Report: Annual, 1894-95."

in 1888.

Of all the four British Colonies in West Africa, none experienced the same degree of indifference of the British Government to colonial expansion as the Gambia. For years it was a theater of conflict between the French and the British. The main attraction of the Gambia was the slave trade, but after the legal abolition of slavery in 1807, the prosperity of the country declined. Proposals to cede it to France for more prosperous territory elsewhere were made in Parliament. In 1870 Sir Arthur Kennedy, the Governor of the British West African Settlements recommended the cession of the Gambia to France.¹⁶ Such a suggestion was opposed by merchants, missionaries, some members of Parliament, and the natives of the Gambia as well. One of the prominent Gambian chiefs, King Tomani Bojang of Kombo, wrote to the Queen asking that she "return my territory back to me as an act of friendship" rather than "transfer your settlements to another person."¹⁷ Because of stiff opposition and France's unwillingness to pay the price, the proposal was dropped.

In 1881, Dr. Goulsbury, the chief administrator of the country, headed an expedition designed to ascertain the commercial value of the Colony. His report offered no commercial prospects in the Gambia.¹⁸ It was this lack of commercial incentive that made the British Government allow the tinkering of spheres in the Gambia in an attempt to secure better terms from France in

¹⁶Lady Southorn, The Gambia. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952, 174. Lady Southorn was the wife of Sir Thomas Southorn, the Governor of the Gambia, 1936-1942.

¹⁷Quoted in ibid.

¹⁸Cf. Henry Fenwick Reeve, The Gambia. London: John Murray, 1912, 103.

Egypt and Newfoundland.¹⁹ This attitude of seeming indifference to the Gambia came to an end in 1895 when, "thus far and no further" cession of territory initiated by Joseph Chamberlain came into operation.

As was the case with the other West African colonies, British administrators in the Gambia started treaty-making campaigns with the peoples of the hinterland. By 1887 the British Government had established her sovereignty in many of the hinterland towns.²⁰ Samuel Rowe, the Governor of the West African Settlements, was instrumental in the hoisting of the English flag in many of the towns. In the same year, too, the French flag was hoisted in certain towns of the Gambia. On November 28, 1888, Letters Patent were issued declaring the Gambia a separate Colony to be called "the Colony of the Gambia."²¹ The Gambia was therefore made a distinct colony from Sierra Leone. As French pin-pricks reached exasperating proportions, a delimitation arrangement was signed on August 10, 1889, between England and France. By Articles I and II British possessions in Gambia were defined.²²

Whenever and wherever the British Government tried to carry out its interior policy, it was frequently met by opposition from obstreperous indigeneous chieftains. In 1891, two hinterland chiefs, Fodi Kabba and Fodi Silla, opposed British and French delimitation of their country and British

¹⁹ Whenever the question of the Newfoundland Fisheries and Egypt were revived, discussed, and buried by England and France, the ghost of the cession of the Gambia to France stalked across the British political stage.

²⁰ Hertslet, I, 18-19.

²¹ Ibid., 20.

²² Ibid., II, 729. Further territorial adjustments were made in 1891, 1895-6, 1898-9. The final ratification of boundary arrangements was done in 1904 by the Anglo-French Convention of the same year (April 8, 1904).

movement into the interior. The chiefs' forces attacked British officials. The chiefs were routed by a combined naval and military expedition. Temporary peace was then maintained.

The peace treaty signed in 1891 was but a makeshift arrangement. In 1892 Chief Fodi Silla resisted British entry into his territory. To make the matter worse, he continued the chronic slave-raiding up country. He was definitively defeated by the West India Regiment and deported to St. Louis (French territory) where he died. After Chief Fodi Silla's defeat, his territory was incorporated into the British possessions in the Gambia. In 1894, the Gambia was declared a British Protectorate.

The final straw came in 1900. In that year Chief Fodi Kabba and some of his intransigent allies resisted continued British penetration. The Chief and his clique terrorized the village of Sankandi which was friendly with the British Government. On June 14, 1900, two British Commissioners, Mr. F. C. Sitwell and M. F. E. Silva, proceeded to the village with Sergeant Joseph Cox and some police force. They summoned the Chief to a meeting. The Chief refused to come. When Sitwell tried to arrest the chief, his men fired at the Commissioners and killed both of them and some others. No reprisals were taken until March, 1901, when a sufficient force was recruited. Chief Fodi Kabba's territory was invaded, he was shot and killed and his forts and capital city were demolished. His supporters were executed and some exiled to Sierra Leone. As usual, the story was, that, "the death of Fodi Kabba and the punishment of the criminals brought to an end the opposition to the new order by the few intransigent elements in the Gambia."²³

²³Lady Southorn, 197.

By 1903 British administrators had unchallenged sway in the Protectorate.

Their enemies, except the bees, were completely subjugated.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

In this short survey, the chief concern of the author has been to examine the process of British entry into the hinterland and the ultimate establishment of political authority over the West African Colonies. From the various cases treated in earlier chapters, it is evident that British penetration into West Africa was not by wholesome consent; on the contrary, the period 1885-1900 was fraught with "primary resistance." Prior to 1885 the West African natives had effectively prevented "European invasion of their territories and of their politics." Such effective resistance "lasted so long as Africans had the equipment, the means, and the numbers to maintain their independence."¹ Two developments, however, "weakened or overcame this barrier to penetration." As Coleman put it:

One was the decline in the power of the semimilitary coastal kingdoms which resulted from revolutionary economic changes, as well as other internal developments. The other was the decision of the British government in 1885 to support a more determined and systematic penetration of the interior which was to culminate, fifteen years later, in the establishment of a formal protectorate supported and controlled by British force.²

The natives surrendered their lands under duress. British decision to penetrate the interior was the result of a number of forces: international squabble over spheres of influence, economic factors brought about by the

¹Dike, 10.

²Coleman, 170.

Industrial Revolution, and others. To explain British determination to extend its colonial frontier in 1885 purely as an economic expedient would be a facile and misleading interpretation. Trade was a factor but it was more of a means rather than an end. "Peaceful penetration," "facility for trade," "pacification," and other shibboleths are terms used to gloss over the real essence of British policy in West Africa. The over-riding urge of British agents from 1885-1900 was to secure for the Home Government political dominion over the West African Colonies. Many of the British administrators pursued this task of acquiring vital regions for Britain "with a single-mindedness that amounted at times to an obsession."

Commercial companies as well as individual merchants were equally politically minded in their enterprise in West Africa. They realized that political authority over the territories implied control of the commerce and the resources of the interior. For this reason they frequently invented reasons that called for the annexation of the colonies and for the replacement of moral influence by authority. As Englishmen they dreamed of a far-flung emperium. As Goldie affirmed, his company was not "actuated by purely commercial motives"; the members were, he said, "Englishmen first and investors afterwards."³ In other words, the crux of British decision to go into the interior of the West Coast was, in Chamberlain's honest confession, "the expansion of the Empire."⁴ The policy, no doubt, was adopted because of "a prospect of good" in the future. Political control was the best means of

³F.O. 84/1879, Goldie to the Foreign Office, May 15, 1885. "The Lower Niger."

⁴Boyd, I, 344-345, Chamberlain's Speech in the House of Commons, March 20, 1893, "Pegging Claims for Posterity."

realizing the goal. To quote Lord Salisbury:

By breaking down the resistance system of the native middlemen, colonial agents have given an important impulse to trade, which is evinced by the growing interest of the Chamber of Commerce.⁵

British rule in West Africa was not only authoritarian, which implied the imposing of rules and regulations on the subject peoples, it was equally paternalistic.⁶ The natives were considered as inferior beings who were to be treated as the administrators thought fit. Hence, in the governments that vitally concerned them, African natives were excluded until late. It was not until after 1900 that African members were elected to the Legislative Councils. Between 1885 and 1900, the doors of the Legislative Councils remained closed to African members except those who were "mere tools" of the Government. The Governor of the Gold Coast, Mr. Brandford Griffith, for instance, felt it was impolitic to yield to "the narrow-minded and intensely selfish ideas" of the natives in preference to "the broad, enlightened, straightforward and liberal views" of Englishmen.⁷ It could therefore be seen that:

Colonial governments are not democratic governments. They are not based on consent. Each is the embodiment of the power of an alien country. A colonial government demands obedience; its laws must be obeyed. Those who represent the metropolitan country are top administrators and lawgivers, not subject to the will of those whom they rule. They require not that their

⁵British Sessional Papers, 1892, LVI, 778, Lord Salisbury to Lord Dufferin, March 30, 1892.

⁶Sir Andrew Cohen, British Policy in Changing Africa. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1959, 75. Cohen was the former Head of the African Division of the Colonial Office.

⁷C.O. 96/202, Minute of November 5, 1889, by Brandford Griffith.

colonial subjects acquiesce, but that they submit.⁸

It is easy at times to overlook or undervalue the importance of British penetration in West Africa. One of the misleading political formulas presented by the British Government as a rationale for the West African advance was the pacification of the territories and the civilization of the natives. British commitment in West Africa, Chamberlain told the House of Commons in 1893, was "to take our share in the work of civilization."⁹ To be sure, British administrators contributed immensely to the creation of peace and order out of chaos and confusion. They helped to stop intertribal wars that were quite endemic in West Africa, to stop the nefarious slave traffic and human sacrifices and other barbarous customs. These humanitarian activities redound to the honor of the British. On the other hand, however, "Pax Britannica" was almost immediately followed by "Jus Britannica." While it would not be easy to establish the fact that this was a British modus operandi for achieving political authority, the truth remains that the collapse of the existing native institution (slavery) had serious repercussions on the authority and power of hitherto native chiefs and kings. As their power, wealth and authority rested on the continuance of the native customs, the abolition of these customs meant, in fact, a political demise of the chiefs resulting in the British officials filling the vacuum of power.

A noted authority on Africa, Margery Perham, impressed perhaps by what the British had done in West Africa during their penetration stated:

⁸K. A. Busia, The Challenge of Africa. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962, 67.

⁹Boyd, I, 345.

Until the recent penetration by Britain the greater part of the continent was without the wheel, the plough or transport-animal; almost without stone houses or clothes, except for skins; without writing and so without history. Mentally as well as physically the West Africans were helpless before British intrusion.¹⁰

This implies, as Professor Craig seemed to affirm, that "without colonization and the benefits it brought, the people of West Africa ...would not have been able to rise, as they have in our day, to the position of self-government."¹¹ Such arguments, although with some iota of truth, do not portray the true picture. In most cases "results are cited in explanation of original motives with which they have no connection at the time of action."¹² The improvements that were made in the colonial countries were in most cases incidental and not the primary motive for penetration. The building of railways, roads, harbors, and other utilities were undertaken to facilitate trade and political administration; nor did the British administrators ever think that such benefits were designed for the people. British penetration into West Africa was a purposeful policy, carefully designed for the extension of British political authority, and the reaping thereby of the economic benefits that accompanied political control. Whatever was not advantageous to the Home Government was never proposed by the local administrators.

Both economic and educational schemes were introduced into the protectorates. Prior to 1900 there were few industries established by the British

¹⁰ Margery Perham, "The British Problem in Africa," Foreign Affairs, New York: Foreign Relations, October 1950-July 1951, 29:638.

¹¹ Gordon Craig, Europe Since 1815. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962, 445.

¹² Frederick L. Schuman, International Politics, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1958, 310.

directly. In the Gold Coast the cocoa industry was established under native initiative. In 1879, a Fanti laborer, Tete Oluasshi, smuggled several cocoa beans from San Thome, a Portuguese colony. He eventually established a small cocoa plantation at Mampong.¹³ As the venture proved successful, Governor Griffith in 1887 procured cocoa pods from San Thome and distributed them to natives of Akwapim district. Under government encouragement the cocoa enterprise became the chief export industry of the Gold Coast and has remained such till this day. In Nigeria, too, cocoa plantations were introduced by David Henshaw.

As for education, very few schools were built. Those who were educated were mainly educated in mission schools. It was because of this base of mass illiteracy that British administrators excluded native elements from the administrative circles. As a Nigerian politician pithily said, "if Britain would wage war against these demons [ignorance and poverty] with the same grim determination and despatch as she fought against Hitler ...she would have made a vital and lasting contribution to world peace."¹⁴ Until after 1900 there were no serious steps taken to formulate an educational policy designed for the raising of the standard and efficiency of the bulk of the people. In all cases, officialdom in the protectorates was "indifferent if not opposed to higher education" for the people. The British administrators were content merely with the production of a "cult of detribalized clerks,"-- semieducated recorders who had hardly any academic training whatsoever.

The educational policy of the mother-country left more to be desired.

¹³McPhee, 40.

¹⁴Chief Awolowo, Path to Nigerian Freedom, London: Faber, 1946, 37.

Until 1900 education was under the direct control of missionaries. They controlled practically ninety-nine per cent of the schools. "To all intents and purposes the school is the Church....An appreciation of this fact is cardinal in all considerations of African education."¹⁵ British educational policy in West Africa has been the target of pungent criticism. To quote Coleman:

As to content, the schools equipped the African with little more than an elementary knowledge of the English language for an economic future in which a senior clerkship was the upper limit of his permissible advancement. In terms of need and desire, there were hundreds of candidates for every school vacancy.¹⁶

As economic exploitation of the mineral and other resources of West Africa began actively after 1900, their examination falls beyond the purview of this study. Throughout the entire work, much stress has been placed on the establishment of British political power in West Africa. Political control of the colonies was inevitable if free trade (amidst strong native opposition) was to be a reality. No such political authority could be exerted so long as the native chiefs and kings remained entrenched in power. The practical alternative for the British Government to realize its objective was to remove by force of arms those chiefs and kings who constituted a formidable impediment to the achievement of the desired goal. From cases so far examined in this work, it is clear that the only way to achieve the political objective of those who shaped the national policy was to whittle down all opposition and resistance. In short, the over-emphasized premise

¹⁵Coleman, 113, quoted from A. Victor Murray, The School in the Bush, London, 1929, 65.

¹⁶Ibid., 116.

that British penetration into West Africa from 1885 to 1900 was motivated primarily by desire for trade, conspicuously overlooks the political implications of such a penetration. Facility for trade was but a rationale; it does not explain the primary motive. Political control of the colonies was the crux of the whole venture; it was a necessity if full access to the markets, natural and mineral resources of the colonies, was to be had.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Treaty Between the Royal Niger Company and Native Chiefs, Form No. 5

We, the undersigned Chiefs of _____, with the view to bettering of the condition of our country and people, do this day cede to the Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited), for ever, the whole of our territory extending from _____.

We also give to the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) full power to settle all native disputes arising from any cause whatever, and we pledge ourselves not to enter into any war with any other tribes without the sanction of the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited).

We understand that the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) have full power to mine, farm, and build in any portion of our country.

We bind ourselves not to have any intercourse with any strangers or foreigners except through the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited).

In consideration of the foregoing, the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) bind themselves not to interfere with any of the native laws or customs of the country, consistent with the maintenance of order and good government.

The said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) agree to pay native owners of land a reasonable amount for any portion they may require.

The said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) bind themselves to protect the said Chiefs from the attacks of any neighboring aggressive tribes.

The said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) also agree to pay
the said Chiefs measure native value.

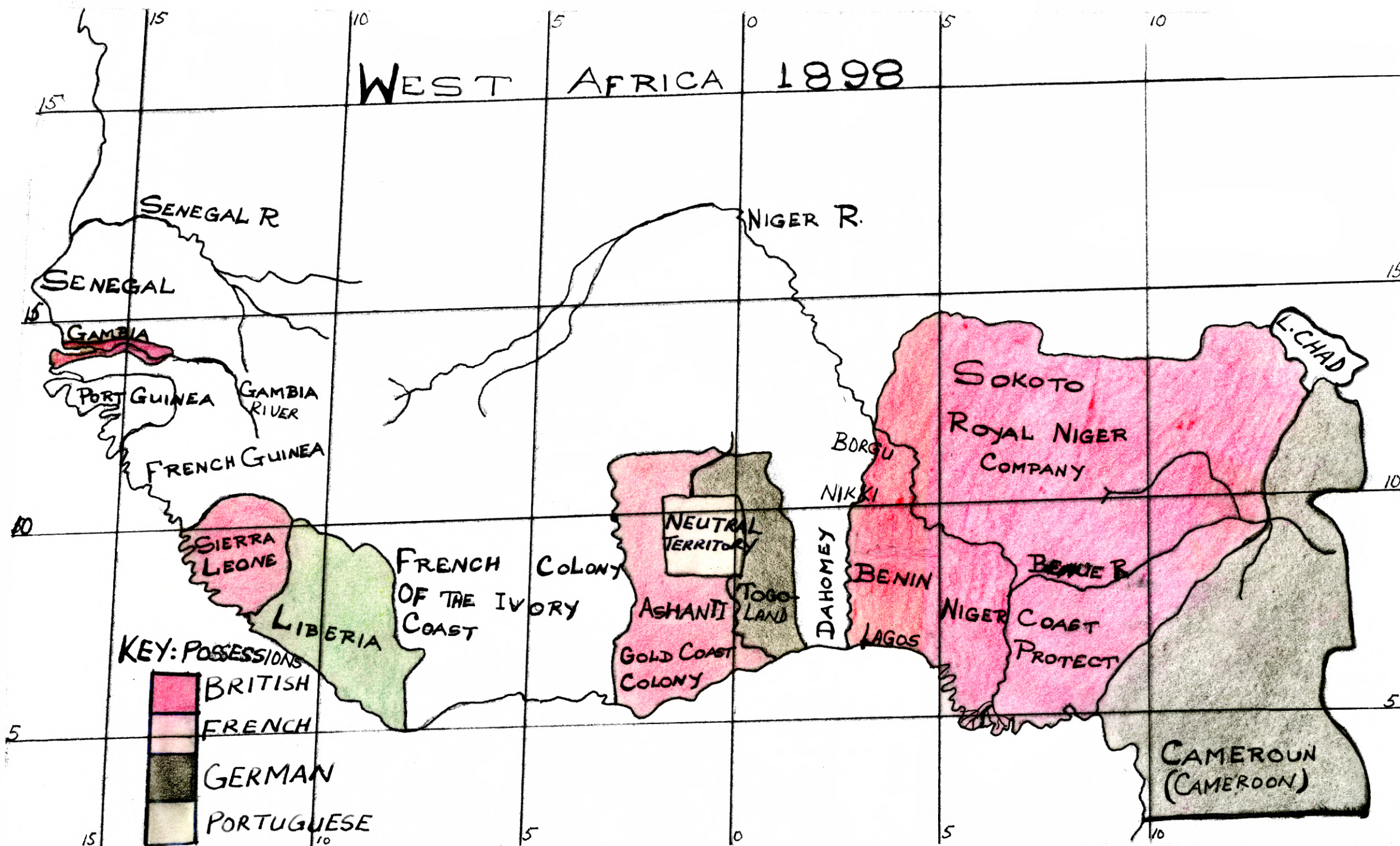
We, the undersigned witnesses, do hereby solemnly declare that the Chiefs whose names are placed opposite their respective crosses have in our presence affixed the crosses of their free will and consent, and that the said _____ has in our presence affixed his signature.

Done in triplicate at _____, this _____ day of _____ 188 .

Declaration by Interpreter.

I, _____, of _____, do hereby solemnly declare that I am well acquainted with the language of the _____ country, and that on the _____ day of _____, 188 _____, I truly and faithfully explained the above Agreement to all the Chiefs present, and that they understood its meaning.

WEST AFRICA 1898



BRITISH COLONIAL POLICY IN WEST AFRICA, 1885-1900

by

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In this attempt to describe British colonial policy in West Africa from 1885-1900, the author has two main objectives. First, to give a brief background of the pattern of British entry into West Africa. Second, to examine the pattern of British extension of political authority from the coast to the hinterland.

The area known as West Africa extends from the River Senegal on the northwest of Africa to the Cameroons on the southeast. The four British colonies in West Africa were the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast (now Ghana), and Nigeria. Except the Gambia, all the others are now independent. These countries are not a compact or uniform unit. On the contrary, they are separated from one another by wedges of territory which belong to either France or Portugal.

British connection with West Africa dates to the sixteenth century when Great Britain joined other European Powers in the scramble for slave trade. British merchants succeeded in displacing the other merchants and so became the dominant dealers in the slave traffic. As the British flag generally followed trade, the British Government formally acquired the four countries as British colonies: the Gambia (1765), Sierra Leone (1808), Gold Coast (1808), and Lagos, Nigeria (1861).

Prior to 1885, British influence in West Africa was limited to the coast. Trade between the British merchants (as well as other European merchants) and the peoples of the interior was transacted through middlemen. The middlemen were chiefs or prominent native businessmen who brought the articles of trade from the interior and sold them to the overseas merchants at the coast. This system was popularly known as the "Coast System." During this period, the British Government adopted a policy of advance by commercial

enterprise and moral influence. Commercial companies were formed for the purpose of trade. These, especially the Royal Niger Company, succeeded in laying the foundations for the future British political administration in the colonies. British Consuls who were stationed at important trading centers were to use their weapon of moral influence in persuading the native chiefs to open up trade and to make treaties which would place them under British protection. Many treaties were signed between the natives and the Government officials thus establishing British influence on the coastal fringes of the colonies. Attempts of the British to penetrate into the interior were foiled by strong native resistance.

A new era opened in 1885. This crucial year marked the historic "rape of Africa." British merchants demanded direct trade with the natives of the interior. "We do not approve of the policy of waiting," they said, "till the traders of the interior come down to us." Between 1882 and 1885, West Africa became the arena of international rivalry over spheres of influence. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, called by Chancellor Bismarck of Germany, provided a modus vivendi for the Europeans in West Africa. The General Acts of the Conference provided for the preservation of the existing rights of each European Power in West Africa and the notification to other Powers of the effective occupation of the territories thus claimed.

In response to the feverish international rivalry and the pressure from the members of the Liberal Cabinet who supported an active interior policy in West Africa, Gladstone's Liberal Government declared the four colonies as British Protectorates by Orders in Council of March 26, 1885. The British Government's decision to advance into the interior was not primarily for the purpose of trade; it was fundamentally political--to extend its political

authority beyond the coast and so assume full political control of the colonies.

To implement this new "forward policy," the Government called to a halt the existing "pacific policy" of advance by trade and moral influence. It adopted an aggressive policy of removing native chiefs and kings who resisted British penetration into the hinterland. To effect the removal of the hitherto native rulers, the British Government, under either the Liberal or the Conservative Governments, used military force. In 1900, British political authority and administration became an accomplished fact. The creation of the British West African Protectorates, as they came to be called in 1900, was not by consent of the native peoples but by conquest.

In conclusion, the British Government in 1885 adopted a policy of transforming influence into authority in West Africa. It achieved its goal in 1900 by establishing political control over the four colonies and thus replacing indigeneous administration by British administration.